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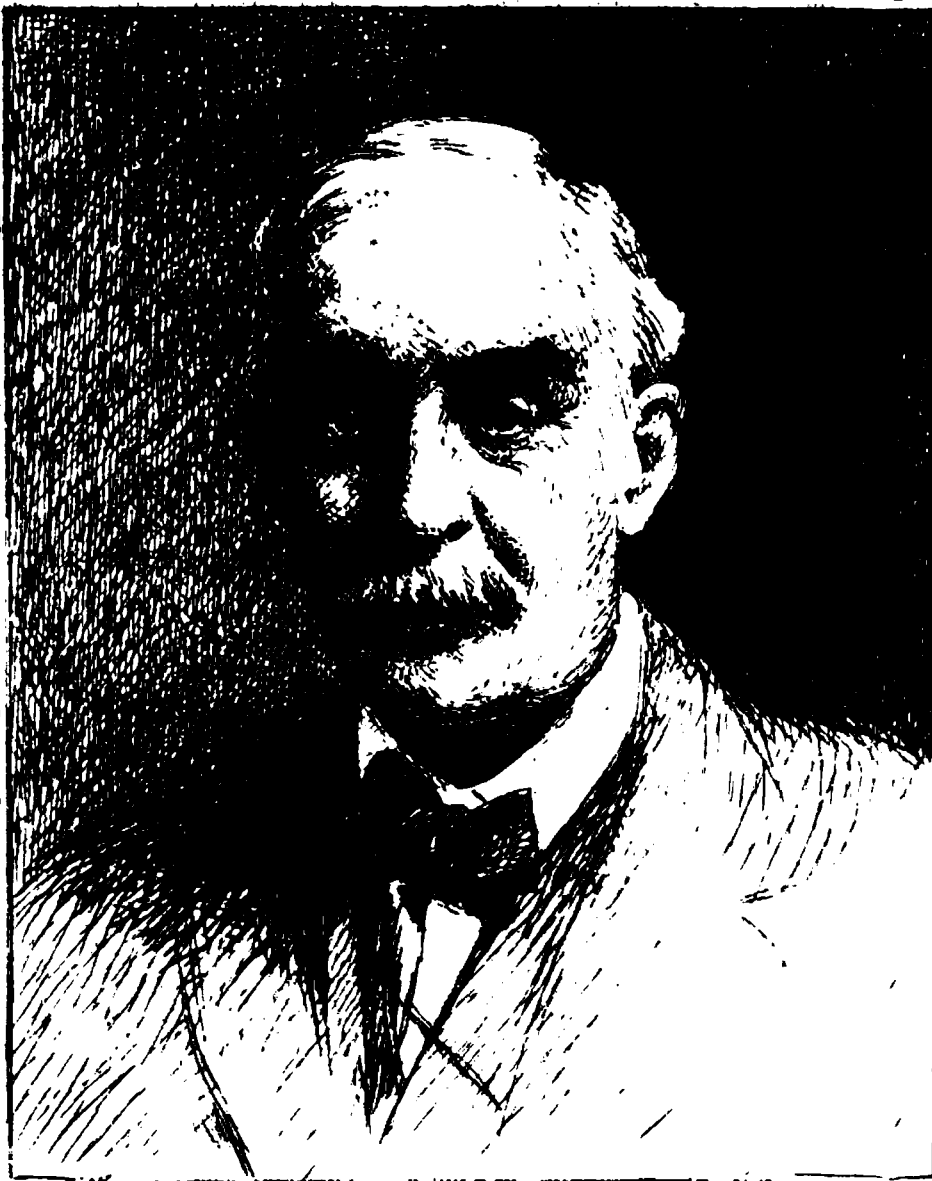
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JESUS, THE CARPENTER OF
NAZARETH

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"I think the idea of this book—the aim and intention—excellent and the execution beautiful. The author has caught the lyric simplicity of the Gospels, and largely succeeded in telling the story in the same quaint unworldly way. I like much the last paragraphs of the chapters. The lesson is always apposite, important, and happily expressed. I wish ministers were acquainted with the book. Nothing could be more useful than to have a chapter out of it read to the young in church."—Rev. PROFESSOR BRUCE, D.D.

JESUS, THE CARPENTER OF NAZARETH

BY
ROBERT BIRD

SEVENTH EDITION



LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRÜBNER & CO., LTD.
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1892

40

P R E F A C E.

THIS life is written in short realistic pictures, endeavouring to avoid theology and sectarianism, that mothers of all creeds may read it to their children, and that children in later life may read it for themselves. Two points are dwelt on, which are common to all the Churches—*the beauty of the Life of Jesus*, and *the personal contact of the Spirit*,—beyond that, lie the dividing walls of creeds and dogmas. Amid the present day questioning of beliefs, writings, and authorities, and the ever broadening of common charity, it is well that our children should begin with Christianity as Jesus left it, that they may be enabled to judge for themselves how much of the sectarian structures of the succeeding ages they need regard as essential to religion, and how much as only optional. A cathedral is a good place to worship in, but some prefer the open field. A simpler Christianity is urgently wanted. The hope of the future is in the young; and there is no better way to make good men and women, than by early training them to look to the highest Example that they can follow—feeding their minds

with the heroism of His gentle deeds, their hearts with the tenderness of His love, their spirits with the purity of His truth--until they deeply realize that in Divine Manhood, Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, amid the scenery of Galilee, walked in very truth the path of life before them, through cloud and sunshine, in joy and sorrow, at once their Hope and their Guide.

INCIDENTS

	PAGE
A GREEN AND SUNNY LAND	1
HIS FATHER AND MOTHER	5
AN ANGEL'S VISIT	8
HIS FATHER'S DREAM	12
THE RIDE TO BETHLEHEM	14
THE ANGELS' SONG	18
JESUS BORN	21
HIS NAME	25
THE GOLDEN TEMPLE	27
THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM	31
THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT	36
KING HEROD AND THE CHILDREN	39
THE RETURN TO NAZARETH	42
CHILDHOOD IN NAZARETH	45
HIS FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM	47
THE TEACHERS IN THE TEMPLE	51
HE LEARNS TO BE A CARPENTER	53
HE LEAVES NAZARETH	58
TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS	63
HE CHOOSES FIVE DISCIPLES	66
THE MARRIAGE AT CANA	69
CLEARING THE GOLDEN TEMPLE	71
NICODEMUS	74
JOHN AND JESUS	77
THE WOMAN AT THE WELL	79
THE NOBLEMAN'S BOY	83
FISHING ON THE LAKE	84
HE HEALS THEM ALL	86
WALKING THROUGH GALILEE	88
LET THROUGH THE ROOF	90
MATTHEW THE TAX-GATHERER	92
THE TWELVE DISCIPLES	95
CONSIDER THE LILIES	98
THE POOL OF BETHESDA	102
IN THE BARLEY-FIELDS	106
STRETCH OUT THINE HAND	108

	PAGE
THE OFFICER'S SERVANT	110
THE WIDOW'S SON	112
JOHN'S MESSAGE	114
MARY MAGDALENE	117
FALSE PHARISEES	120
THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE	124
TREASURES IN HEAVEN	126
WISE AND FOOLISH SERVANTS	128
THE SOWER	131
THE ANGEL-REAPERS	133
THE GREEN BLADE AND THE EAR	135
BIRDS OF THE AIR HAVE NESTS	139
LEGION AND THE SWINE	142
THE RULER'S LITTLE DAUGHTER	145
TWO BLIND BEGGARS	148
THE BROW OF THE HILL	150
THE FIG TREE IN THE VINEYARD	154
HIS DISCIPLES SENT TO TEACH	157
THE PRINCESS SALOME'S DANCE	160
THE RETURN OF THE DISCIPLES	164
CROWN HIM !	167
BE NOT AFRAID !	171
IS NOT THIS JESUS ?	173
MANY LEAVE HIM	177
SPIES FROM JERUSALEM	181
THE TOWNS OF TYRE AND SIDON	184
THE SNOWS OF HERMON	187
ON A BROWN HILLSIDE	189
MEN LIKE TREES WALKING	193
WHO AM I ?	197
GET THEE BEHIND ME, TEMPTER !	200
HIS FACE DID SHINE AS THE SUN	203
LORD, I BELIEVE !	206
A CHILD IN THE MIDST	209
FORGIVE THY BROTHER	213
THE TEMPLE SHEKEL	216
THE FESTIVAL OF BOWERS	219
JESUS IN THE TEMPLE	222
SOLDIERS REFUSE TO TAKE HIM	225
THE LIGHT OF LIFE	228
THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE	232
FAREWELL TO GALILEE	237

	PAGE
THE TEN LEPERS	241
THE LORD'S PRAYER	244
THE GOOD SAMARITAN	247
THE COTTAGE AT BETHANY	251
THE BEGGAR AND THE PRIESTS	254
THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP	258
SOLOMON'S PORCH IN WINTER	262
DANGER IN JERUSALEM	265
AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS	267
THE COUNCIL OF PRIESTS	271
SABBATH-KEEPING	273
KINDNESS AND HUMILITY	266
REJOICING ANGELS	279
THE ERRING BROTHER	283
THE MONEY-GOD	286
THE RICH MAN AND THE BEGGAR	289
ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES	291
HEAVEN IS WITHIN YOU	293
THE DOOR OF HEAVEN	296
MORNING PRAYERS	299
WIVES AND MOTHERS	302
HE BLESSES THE LITTLE CHILDREN	305
THE RICH YOUNG RULER	308
THE WORKERS AND THE VINES	312
THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE	315
ZACCHÆUS IN THE TREE	319
THE KING'S SERVANTS	323
BLIND BARTIMÆUS THE BEGGAR	316
HE RIDES INTO JERUSALEM	330
CHILDREN SHOUTING IN THE TEMPLE	335
HIS LAST TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE	340
THE FRUITS OF HEAVEN	342
THE WEDDING GARMENT	346
A ROMAN PENNY	349
AS THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN	352
THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT	355
SERPENTS, VIPERS, HYPOCRITES !	359
THE WIDOW'S FARTHING	363
CHILDREN OF LIGHT	365
IN CLOUDS OF GLORY	369
LEARN OF THE FIG TREE	373
THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS	375

	PAGE
HUNGRY AND YOU FED ME	378
SHE DID WHAT SHE COULD	381
THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER	383
PREPARING THE PASSOVER SUPPER	386
THE LAST SUPPER	389
JUDAS GOES OUT	393
LITTLE CHILDREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER	397
THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH	401
THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES	405
AND THIS IS HEAVEN	409
THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE	412
HE IS TAKEN A PRISONER	416
BEFORE THE COCK CROWS	420
A MOCK TRIAL	424
STRUCK BY SOLDIERS	428
THE DEATH OF JUDAS	432
BEFORE PILATE	435
MOCKED BY KING ANTIPAS	440
PILATE FINDS NO FAULT	442
THE CROWN OF THORNS	446
DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM	450
NAILED UPON THE CROSS	453
IT IS FINISHED !	456
HIS GRAVE IN THE GARDEN	459
JESUS DEAD !	462
HE IS RISEN !	466
ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS	469
BE NOT DOUBTFUL BUT BELIEVING	472
LOVEST THOU ME ?	474
A CLOUD RECEIVED HIM	478
PETER'S DEFENCE	481
PETER AND JOHN BEFORE CAIAPHAS	485
THE FINISHED PICTURE	488

GALILEE AND THE LAKE OF GENNESARET.

A GREEN AND SUNNY LAND.

WOULDST thou like to hear about the most wonderful One that ever lived? He was beautiful, and kind, and loved little children. His name is JESUS OF NAZARETH! But I wish thee to know all that he ever did or said, and to learn to love Him dearly, for such knowledge is very precious, and will become more precious the older thou dost grow.

It is a long story, but thou wilt not tire, for I will tell it in little pieces, each piece a picture, and very interesting. The first will be about the Sunny Land in which Jesus lived; for, though it is a long time ago, I wish it to seem as though thou hadst seen Him but yesterday in a green glen of Galilee with the people round Him.

He never did grow old, and used to gather children about Him, and speak to them, and take them in His arms, and thou wilt love Him in return before thou hast heard one half of the kind things He did, and the cruel things which were done to Him. He went about teaching and doing wonders, and was taken a prisoner by soldiers, scourged, and killed with great pain, and buried in a beautiful garden; but He rose again, and we are told that, when on a hill-top with His friends, He was taken up, and a white cloud received Him out of their sight. On the night when He was born, a band of angels passed singing through the starry sky; and when He went away, a bright angel stood beside the men on the green hill-top to tell them that He would return.

The sunny land of Palestine, in which He lived, is far away from England. If a man were to walk on in a straight line, it would take him more than one hundred days to reach it. But thou canst not walk thither, for the sea is between it and England, and people have to go in ships, which take fourteen days to reach its warm shores, at the end of the blue Mediterranean Sea. In Summer, it is so hot there that thou wouldst have to wear thin loose clothing; while in Winter, there is seldom any snow excepting on the high hills, and no ice, but there are heavy rains that swell the brooks into dangerous torrents, during which time cold winds blow, especially at night. But this soon passes off, and the sun grows hot, and out come bright flowers among the grass, and leaves upon the trees, making the land green and sunny again, till the grass is dried up with scorching heat. Children should love that country, for it has high windy hills, green and rocky valleys, dark caves, sparkling springs, fruitful plains, particularly where Jesus lived; and there are plenty of sweet fruits, coloured birds, and wild flowers.

Golden oranges, pale lemons, purple grapes, red apples, green olives and citrons grow out of doors there, and children find almonds, figs, walnuts, dates, mulberries, cherries, pomegranates by the roadside. The oranges are not pale like those which come to England, but are left upon the tree until large, sweet, and golden they are about to fall off for ripeness, then the children pluck them. The flowers, too, are more brilliant than in England. In Spring the ground is covered with their bright colours, but their shapes would be strange, and thou wouldst not know their names, but if thou wert to gather a bunch, there would be some which thou hadst often seen before. The white daisy, the crimson poppy, yellow marigolds, blue lupins, climbing convolvulus, red roses, scarlet geraniums, slender white lilies, tulips, crocuses, narcissus, and thousands of red anemones that almost hide the grass with their red heads. Upon the hills, in the glens, and by the springs and streams, are the silver-leaved olive tree, evergreen oak, terebinth, cedar, and fir trees,

and by the wells and villages, the tall feathery palm, or the broad green sycamore, cast their shadows over the flat house roofs, and in the gardens flourish the cypress, myrtle, bay, and rosy flowering oleanders. The birds of Palestine have feathers of red, blue, green, and gold ; with lovely wings and breasts, and strange names—hoopoe, roller, bulbul, sunbird ; but thine eyes would soon discover a grey lark singing in the sky, a redbreast or blackbird on the hedge, and the dear dusty-breasted common English sparrow. There, too, are the wren, titmouse, nightingale, thrush, wagtail, swallow, eagle, raven, crow, partridge, and countless beautiful moths and butterflies. There are wild animals also in lonely places—the hyæna, leopard, wolf, jackal, boar, gazelle ; and every village has its yellow dogs, lean and hungry, that bark at strangers.

The country is very hilly, and stretches along by the sea, with one deep river called the Jordan running through the middle of it from one lake away down to another. At the lower end the ground is bare and rocky, but as you go northward it grows greener, until at the further end it is all hills and valleys, streams and fountains. It was in this highland part, called Galilee, that Jesus lived.

Thou wouldst think His village a very country place, only a cluster of white houses hid in a hollow of the green hills. It is there still, and goes by the same name of Nazareth. Built a little way from the top of the valley, it is sheltered by the hills, and cannot be seen from the great plain below ; but if thou wert to climb the hills behind, thou wouldst see that the little village is a long way from the sea, so that ships do not come near it, and carriages seldom pass through its street. If the day were clear thou mightest see the curving yellow shore and sparkling blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea, with the white sails of ships ; and beyond the wooded line of the Jordan, the great mountain of Hermon, capped with glittering snow. Looking down at the little houses at thy feet, thou wouldst at once say that this quiet village would be a choice place in which to spend one's childhood,

for thou knowest that we do not then need cities, and steam-engines, so much as green hills, and laughing streams to teach us.

Its name, *Nazareth*, some say means "Flowery," because of the wild flowers that bloom around it ; and its houses are still the same kind as when Jesus was a boy—built on both sides of the narrow main street, of white stone, small, square-shaped, like large bricks, with little doors and windows grown over with creeping vines to keep out the sun, and broad flat roofs, having an outside stair to go up by. Tall, thick-leaved trees shade them from the heat ; while gardens fenced with prickly hedges are full of green shrubs and bright flowers.

The village does not lie upon a busy road, and few strangers, except curious visitors, go up the quiet street, with its small crossings branching off. When Jesus lived in a little house just like one of those, still fewer strangers came, and the villagers lived a peaceful life. Shepherds and goatherds, with crook and dog, led out their sheep in the morning to the hills, and watched them straying up and down till night, when they brought them home again. Some were gardeners, who went to the orange and olive groves to trim the trees, or to the grape-slopes to tend the vines, and made oil and wine and raisins out of their fruits. Others were small farmers, who ploughed, sowed, and reaped their wheat and barley crops. On market days the villagers took their baskets of grapes, olives, figs, and grain, their bags of wool, bottles of wine and oil, their eggs, honeycombs, and sheep and goats, down to the busy crowded towns, by the beautiful Lake of Gennesaret, to sell them, or exchange them for the few simple things which they required.

If thou wert to walk up that narrow street to-day thou wouldst meet tall, dark-faced men, with waving cloaks and with bright kerchiefs on their heads ; and red-cheeked women with dresses of blue and red and yellow and with coloured napkins on their dark hair, and a string of silver coins on their brow. They wear no shoes, but have a piece of thick leather tied upon their foot, and their steps make no noise as they walk

over the round stone pavement. Children too, with dark merry eyes and white teeth, would peep round doors and house corners to get a glimpse of the little white stranger who had come to their village.

I have told thee of the flowers, fruits, and hills, and I am sure thou art curious to know in which of these vine-covered cottages Jesus lived, but, what thou art to remember is, that His home was in a peaceful valley in the highlands of a far-off, Sunny Land.

HIS FATHER AND MOTHER.

NAZARETH, B.C. I.

In one of the little houses of Nazareth there lived long ago a carpenter called Joseph. He was descended from the kings of that country, but with a heart as good as any king, he worked daily in a workshop. Though he lived in Nazareth, his father and mother came from Bethlehem, at the other end of the country, so that he did not really belong to Nazareth. Tall, broad-shouldered, and strong, his face was brown with the sun, while his loose and free dress suited hot weather and hard work; only a long linen tunic, without sleeves, close at the neck and coming down to his feet, and a bright girdle round his waist. Over this, a loose cloak of coarse blue cloth, and on his head a coloured kerchief—red, yellow, or striped—bound round his head with a cord, and folded so as to cover his black hair and part of his brow, and hang down on either side, falling upon his shoulders to protect his neck and ears from the sun. He had neither shoes nor stockings, for these would have been too hot; but sandals of leather tied on with thin straps, crossed and wound round his leg and fastened at the knee, and thus his feet were cool, his arms also bare when he threw off his blue cloak to work.

Joseph was well known to the people about Nazareth, for he was a good man and every one employed him; besides, he was descended from King David, and, like every Jew, he was proud of his family.

His carpenter's workshop was open, like a shed, so that the wind might cool him when working, and the rain be kept off, and it had a long wooden bench in the middle upon which to place the box or wheel he was making. With glancing axe in the forest he hewed down trees, split them into logs, and with rasping saw cut them into planks and carried them to his workshop, there to be trimmed and divided, and with measure, chisel, and hammer, made into tables, boxes, wheels, ploughs, saddles, mills, as the villagers wanted. He could make or mend all kinds of wooden things, and build a boat at the Lake-side if required. As soon as the sun rose above the distant hills his work began in the morning, for it was then cool, and he worked until the heat of midday compelled him to rest; but by the afternoon, he was busy again splitting, sawing, hammering, for he gave good work, and prospered well. If thou couldst look into his shed this evening, and see how he stops work only when darkness prevents him seeing any longer, thou wouldst say his face is contented and kind, and wouldst wonder why he works so hard. And he had a reason, for there was a house to build, dishes, jars, lamps, furniture, clothes to get, and goats, and a donkey and saddle to buy, before he could marry the sweet maiden who had promised to be his wife.

In the same village of Nazareth there lived a beautiful maiden called Mary, a name which she has made dear to us all, and which thou wilt ever associate with her after thou hast heard her story. She was not rich, nor yet very poor; living with her father and mother and brothers and sisters, she wore the ordinary dress of a Jewish country girl, yet with a modesty and charm peculiar to herself. Her face was ruddy, and there was a gentle look in her large brown eyes, and a sweet sunny smile on her lip, that showed she was meditative, and had happy thoughts. Her dress was strong and simple,—a long loose jacket of striped colours, close at the neck, open in front, and falling over her bright-coloured lower garments; a soft scarf binding in her waist, and spreading down with a fringe at the ends, while wide hanging sleeves showed her bare arms. Her

light-brown hair was hidden by a long scarlet or white napkin that, bound upon her head, hung down her back, and on her bare feet were loose slippers of yellow leather. Her ornaments were a few thin rings of brass clasped upon her ankles, that tinkled as she walked, a narrow bracelet, perhaps of silver, upon each arm, at her neck a string of glass beads, and in her hair, and across her brow, a row of coins, lighter than sixpences, that flashed and shook as she bowed or turned her head. When, with one hand on her waist, and the other balancing a red water-jug upon her shoulder, she walked down the village street in the evening sunlight, to bring water for her mother from the spring where the village maidens met to chat and laugh, she was a pretty sight, loveliest, gentlest of them all. At home she helped her mother: milking, sewing, baking for her brothers, and gathering firewood; and she could sing the songs of her native land, spin wool, weave cloth, dye bright colours, and make clothing. Strong and light of foot, she did not fear to go out alone, and climb the hills behind, or wander down the vale, nor to be out in the dark; every one knew her, none would harm her, and so she had grown up trustful and fearless.

Her home was not far from Joseph's. She knew him well. Often had he met her in the fields, where the fragrant oleanders grew, and spoken words of sweetness, till now she knew no dearer sight than Joseph coming to meet her, for she loved him with all her heart, and all the village knew that she was to be his wife. His workshop was close by. She knew it too, for did not her heart beat faster every time she passed it when he was there? Often as she went to the fields, or the goats, or the spring, she heard his rough saw rasping through the plank, or the quick blows of his hammer on the wood, and thought of him with pride and pity. Sometimes, too, she paused when she came to his shed, and called to him, and then the carpenter stopped his work, wiping the sweat from his brow, as he listened to her message, and soon she passed on in the sunshine with a happy light in her face as she thought upon his words.

She, too, was busy as Joseph, weaving cloth, making mats, cushions, curtains, garments, and gathering odd things, for in a few quick months they would be married and living together in a small house furnished by themselves.

Thou hast heard much about Joseph and Mary, and I can hear thee ask, "But who are they?" Canst thou not guess? They were to be the father and mother of little Jesus, and I wish thee to remember their names—Joseph, the village carpenter, and Mary, the village maiden.

AN ANGEL'S VISIT.

NAZARETH, SPRING, B.C. I.

One day, it is thought in the evening, when the shadows of the hills were falling over the flowery vale of Nazareth, and the sun's last rays were glittering among the green leaves, for it was the Spring-time, an angel came with a message for Mary. Thou knowest that Heaven is the home of angels. They are God's messengers. Mary was not yet married, and was alone in the dim room of her mother's house, when suddenly the angel Gabriel stood before her, the greatest angel in Heaven, and she was startled and feared to look at him, but thou knowest what an angel is like? Tall as a young man, with a beautiful face, having in it the valour of boyhood and the sweetness of a girl, bright yellow hair, a soft robe, dazzling as frosted snow, gathered and clasped at his neck, and flowing down to a golden fringe at his feet; at his back two great shining wings, which shew that he is a messenger of the heavens; his face, his feet, his hands, glistering like the sun. That is an angel.

"Hail! for thou art highly favoured!" the angel said, in a gentle voice, "God is with thee," and this was partly the usual greeting in that country. Mary heard, but was too much afraid to answer, and sat looking down, wondering what his words could mean.

"Fear not, Mary! for thou art a favourite of God," the

angel continued, noticing her fear ; and, as she sat in her little room with head bowed before him, he went on to give this wonderful message—

“Thou shalt have a son, and shall call Him JESUS. He shall be great, and people will call Him the Son of God : and God will give Him the throne of King David, and He will reign for ever. Of His kingdom there shall be no end.” When the angel ceased there was silence, and he stood looking at Mary, while she sat wondering and thinking, and looking down at his shining feet. She knew Jesus would one day be born, but that *she*, the village maiden, should be His mother, was a thing too strange for her to understand : she expected Jesus would have a queen for His mother. But the angel's voice was so kind, and what he said was so joyful, that gradually her fears vanished, and in a low voice she asked—

“How shall this be ?” And the angel answered, telling her that her cousin Elisabeth, who lived in distant Hebron, would also have a little son, although she was old. Again he ceased speaking, and Mary, who had been earnestly listening to every word, felt that he waited for her answer, and in a low, earnest voice she replied—

“I am the handmaid of God : let it be to me as thou hast said.” Then the angel departed, leaving her alone, wondering at what had happened.

Now, at this time, the people of that country expected that a great Saviour of their nation would soon appear, of whom good news had been written in different parts of the Bible, in many different ways, hundreds of years before. And as the people were much vexed and distressed by their Roman conquerors, they prayed and longed and looked for this Saviour to come with deep and intense desire. They called Him the Messiah, and other beautiful names, but He was best known by the Greek name of the *Christ*. In the Bible it was written that He would be born in Bethlehem, that angels would tell of His coming, that He would be a powerful Prince, and the people believed He would drive out the Romans, and be their king forever. Now Jesus of Nazareth

would indeed be the Christ, but a very different kind of one from what the people expected, and He would indeed found a kingdom, but not such as they longed for. He would not fight, nor resist the Romans, nor sit on a throne, nor wear a crown. The Kingdom which He would found would not be one of cities, armies, and power, but a Kingdom of Heaven in the world, of goodness, joy, and peace in the hearts of men, women, and little children—a kingdom which cannot be seen, for it is within us. Thou wilt remember then, that the words Messiah, Anointed One, King of Israel, Son of King David, Son of Man, Son of God, Lamb of God, The Lord, Emmanuel, Prince of Life, Prince of Peace, and the Christ are all different beautiful names in the Bible for Jesus. And thou wilt understand the great joy of Mary now, and of Elisabeth, and the shepherds, and John the Baptist, and many others hereafter, when they heard that Jesus, *the Christ!* after so many years of weary waiting, and so many false hopes, had come at last.

Mary told no one of the angel's visit, but day after day she pondered over his wonderful words. Something within her said that they were true, and she rejoiced that she should be the mother of Jesus, the Christ, who, she had been taught, would be the Deliverer of her people. She also remembered what the angel had said about Elisabeth, and thought that, perhaps, he intended her to go and see Elisabeth, and she resolved to go and tell her everything. She was a brave maiden, for she was not long afraid of the great angel, nor of the message from God, and now she was about to go on a long journey alone, and she resolved not to tell anyone why she was going from home.

Hebron, where Elisabeth lived, was about eighty miles away, at the other end of the country, among the bare, yellow hills of Judea, and it would take more than four days for Mary to reach it. But she knew the road, having walked it before, and trusted that God and His angels would protect her. With young brave heart, she left her mother's house and dear Joseph, and started on her journey, hastening through

flowery valleys, across rushing streams, over dusty roads, and grassy hills, for it was early Summer. First, down her own valley of Nazareth, then by pathways through the great fruitful plains below, on towards the deep white river Jordan, now climbing into higher ground, now going down into thickly wooded gorges, now walking with other travellers, now walking alone, till on the fourth day, she passed the great city of Jerusalem, which she knew well, and went on and up, among the wild Hebron Hills. What a walk for one so young, gentle, and beautiful !

At length, tired and joyful, she reached Elisabeth's home, in a sheltered vale, and was welcomed with a kiss. It was a fine house, for Elisabeth was of high family, and was married to Zacharias, a priest in the great golden Temple at Jerusalem, and her husband and she were old, and had no children. Elisabeth bathed Mary's feet with cool water, washed her face and hands, dressed her hair, and gave her food, while Mary told the old people how their friends at Nazareth were.

As soon as Elisabeth and she were alone, Mary told her everything about the angel's visit, and when Elisabeth heard her story, it so agreed with what she knew already, and with what she had read and been taught about the coming of the Christ that was to deliver their nation, that she exclaimed joyfully—

“Thou art blessed among women !” and rejoiced greatly at the good news. She also told Mary that what the angel Gabriel had said about her having a child was true, for the angel had also appeared to her husband Zacharias, and again she rejoiced, saying she was not worthy that the mother of Jesus should come to visit her ; and Mary answered, rejoicing also, for their hearts were full of gratitude for the angel's message.

Now I wish thee to remember the obedience and fearlessness of Mary, which showed that she was good and trustful. Just such an one as thou wilt try to be.

HIS FATHER'S DREAM.

NAZARETH, SUMMER, B.C. I.

Mary stayed three months with Elisabeth at Hebron till Spring had passed into full Summer, and the narrow valleys between the hills, once red as fire with anemones, were yellow with withered grass, and the vines were budding on the sunny slopes.

Elisabeth was old and quiet, and filled with the Holy Spirit of goodness, and she knew more than young Mary did. She knew that Mary had a noble life before her, of great joys and great griefs; and they spent day after day quietly together, preparing each other for the time when their little sons Jesus and John would be born. A strange pair, the old white-haired thin-faced Elisabeth, and Mary, young, red-cheeked, learning the wisdom of life from her. When at length she left Elisabeth, Mary returned to Nazareth, alone as she had come, thinking, as she went, that part of the angel's message had already come true. But she told no other one of the angel's visit; not even Joseph, but prayed to God, and felt that it was her duty to tell no one. So she resumed her quiet village life, doing her mother's bidding, and preparing for her marriage, for Joseph and she were betrothed, that is they had promised to marry each other.

Now a betrothal in Nazareth was almost as binding as a marriage. It took place solemnly before friends in the house of the young girl's mother. Joseph would hold out a penny to Mary, saying, "I betroth thee to myself," to which she would reply, by taking the money, and agreeing to marry him, then perhaps they would both sign a paper, and though they did not yet live together, they were bound to each other in a way that could not easily be broken.

About a month after Mary returned from Hebron, Elisabeth's little son was born, and she called him John, as the angel had said. A few months more and Mary's wedding was drawing near, but she had not told Joseph yet of the angel's

message. Some one whispered to him however that his betrothed was about to have a child. He did not believe it, and spoke to Mary, who then told him everything, and he was so vexed and astonished that he did not know what to think. He had never heard of such a thing, and with a sad heart, he began to wonder whether Mary was trying to deceive him, and had done a wrong thing for which the law said she might be put to death. He was a good man, and was filled with sorrow when he thought that perhaps Mary was not the loving maiden he had believed her to be. Perhaps she or her mother had made up the story about the great angel, in order to hide her fault? Joseph could not tell, but, deeply as he loved Mary, he felt that he ought not to marry her now, still he could not bear to think of her being openly disgraced and perhaps punished; so he resolved to keep Mary's secret, and privately break off their betrothal, telling no one the reason. And who can tell how grieved was Mary's heart during these sorrowful days of Joseph's estrangement from her. Day after day went sadly past. He missed Mary's bright face and gentle voice from his work-shop, and he met her no more in the fields at eventide, but he could not bring himself to do the thing that would ruin her life; and so he waited on.

One night as he lay, wearied with his day's toil, asleep and dreaming of her whose soft brown eyes seemed bent on him in silent pleading; the dream changed. Mary's face faded away in a golden vision. The room seemed filled with light, and an angel with shining wings stood beside him.

"Joseph," the angel said, "be not afraid to take Mary to be thy wife, for her Son is from God," and seeing a glad smile pass over the sleeper's face, the angel added, "Thou shalt call the Child's name JESUS, for he shall save His people from wickedness." And having given this message, the angel departed, the dream ended, and Joseph awoke, and there was no one in his little dark room.

He did not doubt that his beautiful dream was a message from

God, and that the angel was the same as had appeared to Mary, and the message filled him with joy, for it restored his beloved one to him, and raised her to the highest place among women. He rose very early in the morning, and the sun never shone so brightly, nor did the birds sing so sweetly, nor was his heart ever more joyful than when he hastened through the village to find Mary, and tell her that he now believed every word of her story, and that they must never be parted. He would beg her to forgive him for ever doubting her, and thou canst see the warm blush of joy on Mary's cheek, as, with a kiss of silent welcome, she tells Joseph she has no fears now. And so they walked together again through the Summer fields around Nazareth, talking in loving whispers of the wonderful messages of the angel, and of their happy marriage, which would soon be now.

And thou wilt remember to admire and love Joseph for the kind way he treated Mary, when he was in trouble and doubt as to whether the story she had told him was true.

THE RIDE TO BETHLEHEM.

NAZARETH, AUTUMN, B.C. 1.

Mary's first trial was over. The barley fields were reaped in the plains, the purple grapes plucked and pressed, and the ripe red apples and dark green olives shaken from their branches. For Summer had passed into Autumn. Mary's wedding day had come, and she would be about fifteen, for women grow up much sooner in that country than in England.

Now a marriage in Nazareth was a time of great rejoicing, when children shouted, and youths and maidens danced, played, and sang. Mary would be married in Joseph's father's house, whither, by her young companions, she was brought from her mother's, all dressed in white, and decked with fragrant flowers and wearing her best ornaments, a wreath of green myrtle leaves upon her head, and her lovely brown

hair unbound and hanging loose, but hidden from sight by a fine white veil that covered her from head to foot. She would come at night, her path lit by torches and lanterns on poles, young girls surrounding her, dancing and singing her praises to the music of flutes, timbrels, castanets, and the drums and triangles of the young men, while the village people looked on at the bridal procession of the fairest and best of maidens. The house where their friends met to see the wedding was garlanded with leaves and bunches of fresh flowers. The ceremony was simple. Before them all, they took each other as husband and wife, Joseph promising to work for Mary and honour her; then their young friends showered flowers upon them as they signed a marriage paper, and sat down side by side to a merry wedding-feast.

After a week of dancing, feasting, and rejoicing, Joseph took Mary away to the quiet little house in the village which was to be her new home. They spent the beautiful Autumn quietly in Nazareth, and when the Winter time came they had to go upon a journey to a little town called Bethlehem, near to where Elisabeth lived, and while they only intended to be away for a few weeks: they did not return for months. They were compelled with many other people to take this journey, for the country had been conquered by the Romans, and the Emperor Cæsar Augustus, who wished to know how many people there were, had ordered every man to be counted. As Joseph belonged to Bethlehem, he had to give in his name there by the command of the Jewish King Herod, and he took Mary with him, not caring to be parted from her so soon.

Bethlehem was seventy miles off, and it took four days to go, and as Mary could not walk so far, Joseph got a little shaggy ass for her to ride on. They started early on a December morning, when the trees were bare, and shaken with cold winds, and the brooks white with dashing water. Joseph, tall and strong, with his rough blue cloak over his shoulder and dark red kerchief on his head, guided the ass with one hand, while with the other he held Mary on its back, as it went

halting and picking its steps slowly down the slippery path and stony watercourse of the vale that widened out into the plain below ; and soon the white houses of the village were hidden from sight, as Joseph led the way over turf, stones, and earth, through the field-paths to the common road across the great plain of Esdraelon. At the brass-mounted saddle hung a bag of clothing and provisions, and on the other side a leather skin of water from the spring, while the bridle and trappings were gay with a fringe of knotted and coloured cords that hung over the ass's nose, with perhaps a red or yellow tassel, made by Mary's own hands, hanging under its neck.

As they went through the fields on the level plain of Esdraelon, they saw the rich soil being ploughed up with wooden ploughs and slow oxen, and the seed cast in by the people from the small villages of white houses, of which there were a great number. Behind them were the wooded hills of Galilee, with mount Tabor towering above the plain covered with trees to its rounded top ; before them the Carmel range and the dim blue hills of Samaria. Joseph would take the easier but longer road down by the Jordan river, across and along its Eastern bank, recrossing at the fords, and passing through the rose gardens and orchards of Jericho. It was their first trip from home together, and he would take care not to expose Mary to the cutting winds on the hill-tops, nor bring the little ass to streams too deep to wade across. From the high ridges he would point out the scenes below, and tell her the names of the hills, towns, and villages ; and in the hollows she would dismount, and they would rest and take food, while the ass cropped the grass. They had plenty of company, for thousands of people were moving about the country, like themselves, going to be counted.

By day they walked steadily on, and at night they slept in some friendly house, for the people thought it wicked not to take travellers in at night. On the fourth day they passed Jerusalem, the greatest city in that country, and went on towards Bethlehem, among the hills, six miles along the Hebron road. The way then grew more uneven, winding along hillsides, and

ever getting higher, till at length they saw the low houses and white walls of Bethlehem, upon the top of a hill some way off. All around them were hills and valleys, with plenty of grass for sheep, and trees by the streams, while the hillsides near Bethlehem were covered with vine terraces and gardens of pomegranates, figs, apples, with walls round them and watch-towers at the corners. The path was steep and rocky from the plains below to the walls of the village ; but after a slow and hard climb, they passed under the stone arch of the gateway, with its square tower built over it, and were in Joseph's own village, from the walls of which they looked over a country of many white and grey hills, with spots of green between, the view extending down to the Philistine plains by the sea on one side, and on the other side down the gorges to the Dead Sea, with its red granite hills at the edge, and the great blue mountains of Moab beyond.

Thus far, all had gone well, although it was hard and even dangerous to travel such roads in Winter. But the village was crowded with strangers, who had also come to be counted, and when Joseph went to the friend's house with whom he intended to stay, he found it already full. He went to another and another, but they were also full, and as Mary was very tired, he resolved to search no more, but go to the village inn. Leading the ass with drooping head through the stony streets, at length they reached the inn, only to find it full also. It was a poor and comfortless place, a few low-roofed houses built round a square that was open to the sky, with a pool of water in the middle for the animals to drink at, and all that strangers could get there was water for the beasts and a place to sleep in. Entering by the low archway, Joseph found the open square filled with long-necked camels, horses, asses, goats, with their loads and saddles lying about, and men and dogs going to and fro ; but they were so tired that, having got in, he resolved to sleep in any corner he could get for the night, rather than walk any more about the streets. There were places for the horses round the square, some built of stone, some only shallow caves cut out of the soft limestone rock,

and finding an empty stall in one of these cave-stables, thither he led the ass with Mary, to get them out of the confusion of the crowd.

Darkness was now coming on, and they had to make the best of the place they were in for one night, hoping to get into a friend's house in the morning. An open stall in a crowded public inn, how different from Mary's little home at Nazareth! No doubt Joseph got straw and mats, and made it as comfortable as he could, hanging a large mat over the doorway to keep the cold wind out; but as the dark-faced men looked in on their way past, they thought it a strange place for one so gentle and beautiful as Mary to lodge in. And so the ass was tied close by, and amid the sound of men's voices, jingling camel-bells, trampling of feet on the pavement, and yelping of dogs, Mary and Joseph prepared to spend their first night in Bethlehem.

And thou wilt remember that Joseph had come to Bethlehem to be counted, and that they had to lodge in a stable, not because they were so poor, but because the village inn was full.

THE ANGELS' SONG.

BETHLEHEM, WINTER, B.C. 1.

And that very night Jesus was born! In a stable in the month of December, among straw, and with animals near. And Mary took her little child and wrapped Him in baby clothes, and laid Him softly in a manger—a little box out of which horses eat—which served for His first cradle. And Joseph had more mats put up to keep away the cold, and a little lamp hung upon a string, that those who came might see their way.

Out in the starry night a band of shepherds watched their sheep on the green plains below Bethlehem; hardy men, who had to guard their flocks, for they were near a desert where there were wild animals. In that country shepherds think

nothing of being out all night if the weather be good, for the sky is of a rich blue with great silvery stars that sparkle and throb, and a moon clearer and brighter than ever it is in England, so that things can be seen afar off. The night was fine, and the shepherds took turn about of keeping awake and watching with their faithful dogs, that no sneaking wolf nor shrieking hyena should catch their lambs ; for there were wild wooded gorges near, where these animals lived. On these plains, long ago, King David, while yet a youth, had slain a bear and a lion that attacked his father's sheep. The shepherds loved their sheep, and even yet in that country, when the time comes for the sheep to go home, the shepherd-boy does not set his dog barking at them, but taking out a little whistle-pipe, he blows a few shrill funny notes, and over hillock and rock the sheep come bounding and follow him away.

The clothing of these shepherds was of coarse cloth, some having warm coats made of sheepskin with the wool inside, and on their heads were bright-coloured kerchiefs that scarcely hid their tangled hair ; and they had large loose cloaks that they could wrap round them and sleep in. The night was chilly, and as they sat round the fire which they had lighted to scare wild animals away, the silence of the wide plains was broken only by the bleating of the sheep close by, or the howling of a distant wolf, the clear stars quivered and flashed, and the moon shone like a bow of crystal in the blue ; when suddenly one of the shepherds, who had been looking at the sky, uttered a cry of surprise, and springing to his feet stood pointing upward. And soon they were all standing gazing at the figure of a beautiful angel that, with wide outstretched wings, came swiftly down the skies, making all light around him. He was coming towards Bethlehem, towards the plains ! towards them ! and then he came so near that they could not look upon his brightness, but they knew that he was standing on the grass beside them, for a golden glory from Heaven shone round about them.

"Be not afraid," the angel said, "for I bring you good tidings of great joy, to all people. Jesus, the Christ, is born

to-day in Bethlehem! and this is how you will know Him. You will find Him, a little Child, wrapped in baby clothes, and lying in a manger." And, as he spoke, his face shone, for this was the most joyful message he had ever carried.

They had never seen such a shining form, nor heard so sweet a voice, and were filled with amazement that such a lovely being should give this glorious message to rough men like them. But he had scarcely ceased, when they heard the sweetest music in the air that has ever come to earth, like the singing of a multitude of voices, faint and far away, and looking up they saw a host of angels, more than they could count, floating through the stars, down, down towards the green earth, with white robes trailing, and shining wings outspread, and it was from them that the singing came. As they passed down into the open blue sky above the hills, the shepherds saw how lovely were their shapes, and listening in perfect silence they heard them singing, and singing again these beautiful words—

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men! Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men!" Words which have been sung by many angel children on many a Christmas Eve since then.

The shepherds had never seen such a glorious sight, nor heard such sweet and thrilling music. The angels passed over the towers and roofs of sleeping Bethlehem, and along the sky, and as they floated over their heads the whole air and earth seemed filled with the sound of their pure voices, and the plains were flooded with golden light as if a window in Heaven had been opened over them. They watched the trail of their white robes, and saw their joyful faces, and heard the beat of their great soft wings, but they did not touch the plains, as the shepherds expected, but leaving the earth, they rose again above the dark hills into the blue sky, passing through the throbbing stars, a milky way of angels beating their way upward towards the golden gates, the music of their voices sounding fainter and fainter, now heard, now lost on the night wind, until their bright trail faded among the lights of

Heaven, and the music died away. The shepherds turned to the angel, but he was gone. Spreading his shining wings he had joined the bright throng unnoticed as they gazed, and there was nothing but dewy grass and rosy daisies where his feet had been.

If thou wouldst remember this scene, learn to sing the beautiful hymn which says—

“It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old,
From angels bending o’er the earth,
To touch their harps of gold ;
Peace be on earth, good-will to men,
And glory to Heaven’s King,
And the world in solemn silence lay,
To hear the angels sing.”

And when thou hearest songs in the night time at Christmas-tide, think of the shepherds out on the plains and of the angels’ song, and say these words over and over again to thyself, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.”

JESUS BORN.

BETHLEHEM, CHRISTMAS, B.C. I.

When the shepherds on the plains recovered from their astonishment, they looked up to Bethlehem on the hill, and the moon was beaming from the blue sky overhead, and shining on the white houses, and flooding the streets with silver, and they talked excitedly together. Did the angel mean them to go and see this wonderful Child of whom he spoke? Was it all a beautiful dream? But each had heard and seen the same things, so that it could not be a dream. Now, as thou knowest, the people were expecting the Christ the Deliverer of their nation to come about this time, and that He would be born in Bethlehem, and these shepherds wondered with suppressed joy whether it could really be true that the Christ had come at last. After talking together,

they settled that as many as could be spared should go up to the village and see whether there was a babe in a manger there, for the angel had said this would be the sign that it was indeed Jesus the Christ.

Leaving one or two to watch the sheep until morning, they hastened across the grassy plains, through the fields and gardens, and climbing the rugged pathway were soon close to the white walls of the village. The gates were shut and all was silent, but they roused the sleeping watchman by their loud knocking, who looked at them drowsily from his strong tower on the wall, and recognizing the shepherds, came down and opened the gate. With a short greeting they hurried on up the main street, for, guessing that the angel meant the large stable of the public inn, the principal stable in the village, they went to it.

A lamp hanging from a rope stretched across the open archway showed them the square within, where the animals were resting, kneeling and lying on the ground. Going through this stone arch, they looked about them and saw a dim light burning in one of the side stables cut out of the rock, but they could not see who were in it for a curtain at the entrance. Whispering together and making as little noise as possible, with beating hearts they went towards it. They were almost afraid to look in, for they expected to see a glorious child, with angels bending over him.

Drawing near on tiptoe, one of them gently and silently held the curtain to one side, while they all came close to look. And what did they see? A beautiful young maiden lying on a rude couch of straw, and a strong young countryman watching beside her. This was not what they expected. In eager whispers they asked Joseph and Mary, who were startled on seeing their dark faces peering in, whether there was a babe there. Joseph pointed to the manger close beside Mary, and beckoned to them to come in. With noiseless feet they stepped upon the raised stone floor of the stall, and soon, by the light of a little rush-lamp that burned near, these dusky-faced men, some kneeling, some bending, gazed with wonder

and awe upon the rosy face of the sleeping Jesus, and they could scarce draw their breath as they thought that there lay the Christ, the hope of their nation of whom the herald angels sung, sleeping like a mortal child.

In whispers and with gestures, their excited faces, their flashing eyes and strange rough coats but dimly seen in the lamplight, they told Joseph what they had heard and seen out on the plains, repeating the words of the angel's message. Mary, who was frightened at first by their coming, now knew that they too had seen messengers from Heaven, and was glad when she thought that the beautiful angels were rejoicing over the birth of her Child.

When the shepherds withdrew into the courtyard, they told Joseph the whole story over again of the wonderful vision of angels, and of their message ; and the people in the court, attracted by their strange behaviour, came to listen, and also went and looked at the sleeping Child, and long before daylight all in the inn knew the shepherds' story and wondered at it. The shepherds did not wait in Bethlehem, but went away, shouting as they went—"The Christ has come, praise be to God!" making the streets echo with their shouts in the early morning, and sleepers awake to wonder what they meant, as they returned rejoicing on their way out to the plains to tell their companions.

And that day many strange faces bent over the little Child Jesus as He lay in His strange cradle ; some to shake their doubtful heads as to whether He could be the Christ, others to whisper a prayer, and many to speak kind words to the sweet young mother. And what did Mary think ? It was now almost a year since the great angel had come with the message to her, but she had not forgotten one word, and the shepherds had repeated much of what the angel had said ; and now that she held the promised Babe in her arms and could see Him smile, she felt, with a rapture of joy, that she was indeed the most highly favoured among women. As thou knowest, she was a silent, thoughtful maiden, and everything that happened, and all the heavenly messages, and all that the

people said and did at this time, she laid by in her memory, and when she was alone with her Child, she looked into His beautiful face and pondered over these things.

People who go to Bethlehem now-a-days are shown a cave in the rock, which is said to be the very cave in which Jesus was born ; and while it may not be the exact place, it is perhaps near it, and for hundreds of years men have surrounded it with every mark of tenderness and love, and all for Jesus' sake. It is at the end of the village nearest to Nazareth, and people can see the spot from a distance, for there is a splendid church built over it, standing out upon a rocky part of the hill whence a view is had of the shepherds' grassy plains below.

To reach this cave thou wouldst have to enter the beautiful church and walk over its polished pavement floor, and between its marble pillars, with the light falling softly upon thee from the richly-coloured windows. A solemn monk, with white beard and long robe, would meet thee and take thee to a low door in a side wall, at the entrance of which thou wouldst see a white marble star in the pavement pointing thee to the door. Going through that door, thou wouldst find fifteen marble steps leading down to the wonderful cave, and he would tell thee that this was the place thou hadst come to see, and on going down thou wouldst hear distant music sounding, and wouldst find thyself in a cave underground, cut out of the white limestone rock, with a floor of black marble, veined with red, all brilliantly lighted up by thirty-two fragrant lamps of gold and silver and sparkling crystal, that hang with silver chains from the roof, and are never allowed to go out by night or by day. Looking round, thou wouldst not be able to see any of the white rock, for marble of all colours with which the walls and roof are covered, and for pictures made of bright-coloured stones that are upon the walls, and thou wouldst see that the cave was about the size of a long narrow room, 13 yards long and 2 yards wide, with a low roof, not much higher than a tall man. Thy dark-faced guide would then take thee over to a place hollowed out in the wall,

in which small hollow a number of little lamps are hung by gold chains, and there thou wouldst see a magnificent star of silver, precious stones, and jewels, set in the pavement, shining and sparkling under these lamps, and written in Latin round this star are these words

“Jesus was born here of the Virgin Mary.”

And thy guide would tell thee that this was the very stall in which Jesus was born. He would then take thee across the cave to a hollow in the opposite wall, from the roof of which more small beautiful lamps are hung, lighting up a pure white marble manger, shaped like a cradle, and he would tell thee that on this spot stood the manger in which Mary laid Jesus. Before the marble manger burn two small fires that are never allowed to go out, called incense fires, the smoke of which fills the cave with heavy fragrance.

The monk would also take thee to other parts and show thee other strange things, but thou wouldst be more interested in seeing the men with foreign looks and strange bright-hued dresses, who come down the white marble steps and fall upon their faces before the silver star or the marble manger, and with prayers and sighs kiss the pavement, for these men have travelled hundreds of miles to pray in that cave. They do not doubt that Jesus was born there. Perhaps He was, perhaps He was not; I think very likely not, and would not have thee trouble thyself much about it, or think more of that cave than of any other wonderful sight. The thing that thou art to rejoice in is that Jesus was born, and that thou canst pray to Him and worship Him as well in thine own little room, or on the open hillside as in that jewelled cave in Bethlehem.

HIS NAME.

JERUSALEM, JANUARY, A.D. I.

Every little child in that country had a name given to it when it was eight days old, and this could be done either in

the church or at home among friends. The beautiful angel said to His father and mother, "Thou shalt call Him Jesus," so that they had no trouble in choosing His name. Taking Jesus in his arms, Joseph would tell his friends what His name was to be, and when they asked why he did not call Him Joseph, or some other family name, he would say that he had been told His name in a dream, but more than that he would not tell.

In those days every name had a well-known meaning. It was a pretty custom, but although names still have meanings, very few people care about them now. What is thy name? Perhaps thou art a little Harold, or Margaret, or Wilfrid, or Mary? Thou shouldst learn the meaning of thy name. Harold means a champion; Margaret means a pearl; Wilfrid means the peace-winner; Mary means bitterness. But thy name was given thee not for its meaning, but because it was some other person's name before thee, or for its pretty sound, but Jesus got His name because of its meaning only. There is no other name so beautiful, for it means "Saviour;" the angel told Mary so when he said—

"Thou shalt call Him Jesus, for he shall save His people." And when thou hearest all the kind things that Jesus did, and understandest that He saves people from wickedness, who try to be like Him, thou wilt say He well deserves His beautiful name of "Saviour."

Mary and Joseph lived quietly in some friend's house in Bethlehem till Jesus was a month old, and her cousin Elisabeth would come from Hebron to see her, bringing her little babe John, for it was the rule that Mary should not go out for a month, and that as her Child was a little Boy, her first journey should be to the Golden Temple, to return thanks and present Him there. She was glad when at last she could come out into the early morning sunshine of January, with Jesus sleeping in her arms, and mounting the little ass, ride away to Jerusalem, which was only six miles off. The road descended, winding among the hills, and vales which were already becoming green with early grass, and

after two hours' riding they approached the city, passing through the fine houses of rich men, and the king's gardens with their sheltered flowers and trees, and by the pool of Gihon in the vale of Hinnom as they came near to the high walls and great square towers of the city. By a long stone archway they went through the Bethlehem Gate, and then they were in a narrow street paved with round white stones, with houses on each side so high that the sun could not reach them as the ass toiled quietly on, climbing up towards a high part of the town called Mount Moriah, on which the great Golden Temple was built. Passing over the long stone bridge of the deep Tyropœan Valley that divided the city, they waited among a crowd of worshippers for the opening of the Temple doors. It was the rule that Mary should bring a small present of two turtle doves or two young pigeons. These could be bought at the Temple doors, and while she rested on the white marble steps, Joseph, who had not much money, bought two little pigeons in a small wicker cage.

And thou wilt remember how He was called by the dear name of Jesus, and that it means "Saviour," because He saves people from wickedness.

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE.

JERUSALEM, JANUARY, A.D. I

At length the sound of silver trumpets blown three times within the Temple, told Joseph and Mary that it was nine o'clock, and they saw the great doors of the Temple slowly opened that all might enter in to the morning service. With little Jesus in her arms, and Joseph at her side, Mary went up the white steps and into the Royal porch, which was the most splendid of all the Temple porches, having four rows of forty marble pillars in each row, all of different colours, and covered by a richly ornamented roof; yet this was only one side of the great outer Temple square. Going through these pillars, they walked out into the wide court of the Gentiles, which was open to the blue

sky, and paved with the finest variegated marble of all colours, and went towards a magnificent building of pure white marble with pillars all round it, which rose, terrace above terrace, from the middle of this open square, the highest terrace having a peaked roof of cedar wood covered with gold, where the morning sun was reflected in a blaze of fire. This great terraced building was the inner Temple, and that roof of gold covered the Holiest place of all.

They went towards the lower end of this splendid building, passing through on their way a beautifully ornamented wall-screen of marble, about the height of a boy, and past which none but Jews might go, on pain of death, and towards twelve great white marble steps which led up to the first magnificent gate of the inner Temple. This gate was made of bright Corinthian brass, richly wrought, and was so heavy that it took twenty men to move it, and it was called the Beautiful Gate, and over it was set a huge eagle of brass, placed there by King Herod to please the Romans. Going up these steps they passed through the porch consisting of two rows of marble pillars, and then they entered the Court of the Women, which was also open to the blue sky and paved with coloured marble. Going across this court, they came to fifteen very broad marble steps, shaped in a half-circle, on which the Temple singers and musicians stood when performing, and which led up to the porch of a second gate, the great Nicanor gate, which was richly ornamented with silver and gold, the most beautiful of all the gates of the Temple. Going up these steps, they waited among the pillars and arches of the Nicanor porch, at the end of which was this splendid gate, but it was shut, for inside were the courts of the Men and the Priests, into which no woman was allowed to go.

When the Nicanor gate was opened, looking in they saw the white-robed priests and the huge altar built of unhewn stone, with the smoke of the morning sacrifice rising from it, the great heap of salt with which every sacrifice was salted, the marble tables for laying the sacrifices on, and the silver table, covered

with gold and silver bowls and the gold shovels, tongs, spoons, hooks, and knives of the priests. They saw also the great brass laver for water at one side, shaped like the cup of a huge flower, and supported on twelve brazen lions, while beyond, and on a higher terrace still, rose the Holy place, roofed with gold, and built of huge stones covered with gold, with pillars of snowy marble, while over the entrance to its porch of pillars, hung a great outer curtain of blue, scarlet, purple, and white, beyond which Joseph and Mary could not see. But inside that porch was a door plated with gold, and covered with a thick curtain of the same colour as the last, and over it was a great vine of pure gold, the bunches of grapes being as tall as a man. Behind these closed doors was the Holy place in which were two golden tables with golden crowns wrought round them, on which stood twelve cakes of shew-bread, and opposite to them stood the golden candlestick with seven lights shaped like almond tree blossoms, which were always kept burning. And near to a magnificent veil of blue, scarlet, purple, gold, and white, richly wrought together, at the further end, was the square golden altar of incense, on which the priests burnt incense of sweet spices every morning when they trimmed the lamps of the golden candlestick and poured in fragrant olive oil. Within that great veil was a room whose walls and roof were covered with plates of gold, and which every Jew regarded with awe and dread, calling it the Holy of Holies ; and in the midst of that glittering silent place was a large rough stone, and nothing else.

Mary waited with her little basket of doves until the white-robed Levites from the Priests' court within, came out to the woman at the gate, when she handed one of them her present, which he carried away to be offered on the altar. Then a priest came out, and all the women went towards him, when he sprinkled some drops of blood upon them, and blessed them. Thus was the gentle Mary purified, as it was called. But Jesus had yet to be presented, for it was the rule that every eldest boy had to be presented as a gift to God in the Temple, and if his parents wished it, the priests would keep

him and train him up among themselves, but if not, then they had to pay five silver shekels (worth about ten shillings) to get their little boy back again ; but only beautiful children could be so presented.

Taking little Jesus from His mother, Joseph carried Him away through the Nicanor gate into the Men's court within, and put Him into a priest's arms, telling him that the Baby boy was Mary's first Child. The priest asked if he wished Him back again, to which Joseph said "Yes," handing him the five silver shekels. The priest then gave Jesus back to Joseph, and putting one hand on the Child's brow, with the other which held the money, he made a circle round His head, saying—

"This is instead of this, and this for this. May this Child be brought to life, to the law, and to the fear of God." And, putting both hands on the Child's head, he said a short prayer, commencing thus :

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Then he turned away, and Joseph carried Jesus back to His mother, whose young face had been watching them at the gate through which she dared not go. Clasping her little boy in her arms, and kissing Him, Mary turned away and went down the great white steps into the Women's court again.

As they went out, an old man of Jerusalem, called Simeon, who believed that he would not die until he had seen the Christ who was to save his people, passed by, leaning on his staff, and with his white hair on his shoulders, and the Spirit of God told him that little Jesus was the young Christ. Stopping Mary, he begged that she would let him hold the Child. With a surprised glance at his face, Mary put the Child into his arms. In a voice trembling with deep emotion, the old man thanked God for that day, saying that he was now willing to die, having seen Jesus the Christ. Turning to Mary, he told her that her Child would have a great effect on the rising and falling of many in their nation, and that great sorrow would come to her. With one more look at the

face of Jesus, he gave Him back to His mother, and leaning on his staff moved slowly on to prayers in the inner Temple.

Hardly had he gone, when Anna, an old and very good woman, who was often in the Temple worshipping, hearing what Simeon said, came up to Mary, who was to her a mere girl, for she was nearly one hundred years old, and her husband had died when she was only a few years older than Mary, and looking at the young mother and her Child, she also recognised Jesus as the young Christ, and gave thanks joyfully to God that He was born ; and to the people who were near she said that the Child would be the Saviour of the nation. And many of the people believed her, and were glad, for they knew Anna to be a good woman, and came to look at the wonderful Child Christ that had been presented that day.

Again Mary was put upon the little ass, and taking the bridle in his hand, Joseph guided it down the steep streets, out by the city gate and along the dusty road among the hills, and before night came on they were back again in their friend's house at Bethlehem.

And thou wilt remember that Jesus was presented by His mother in the Golden Temple while still a baby ; just as thy own mother has often presented thee in prayer to God in the temple of her loving heart.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

BETHLEHEM, SPRING, A.D. I.

When Jesus was born, a bright new star was discovered in the sky, sparkling and flashing through the blue night. There were men then who watched the stars, and said they could tell from their movements what would happen, and that stars had a great deal to do with people's lives. These wise men were called Magi, and some of them lived in an Eastern city (some think in Persia) ; and one night, as they watched the same stars which thou seest scattered like chips of silver

over the sky, they noticed this strange bright star shining low down where they had never seen it before ; and every evening when it grew dark and the stars began to appear they watched for it, and there it was in the same place again—low and red and near the earth—and they wondered what it could mean. Like old Simeon and Anna, they also believed that the Christ would be born about this time, and would be the King of the Jews—perhaps they themselves were Jews who lived in Persia—and the Spirit of God revealed to them that the Christ had indeed been born, and that this beautiful star was a sign to them to go and find Him, and they were glad, and resolved to go to Jerusalem, although it was far away, and worship the little baby King and take Him presents.

They were rich men, and ordered their servants to saddle camels, and get ready at once for a long journey. Now camels are strange-looking animals, with long thin legs, and can go very fast over the sand with their broad soft feet, and need little water, and the servants put large wooden saddles on them and fringed cloths of crimson and blue, and bridles with red tassels ; and taking food and water and presents, the wise men, dressed in their finest clothes, mounted on the best of the camels, the servants following on others, and rode away, armed with long spears and swords to scare the robbers. They had many miles of hot yellow sand to travel over before they could reach Jesus' country, and every evening when they saw the bright beautiful star shining red and low in the sky before them they stopped, and saddles were unpacked, and tents put up for the night ; and before the star had faded in the morning light they were up and riding on again. And so day after day, resting under green trees when the midday sun was hot, they travelled on, and ever the star that came trembling forth at eve was their guide and hope. I know not how many days they travelled ; but if they saw the star on the night that Jesus was born, and started without delay, they must have travelled for six weeks, for He had been presented in the Temple before they reached Jerusalem.

At length they saw the mountain ranges of the country of

Jesus, and climbing into them found how fresh and beautiful they were with budding leaves, soft grass, and purple hyacinths, crocus and tulip, after the deserts of hot yellow sand from which they came ; a few days more, and they were riding into Jerusalem, thinking their journey at an end. They were surprised, however, to find no signs of rejoicing, no flags or feasting, no music or dancing, and stopping a man they asked him—

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him.” The man did not know. He had never heard of it ; and looking at the swarthy faces and fine dresses of the rich men, he wondered who they were as he walked away. Every one they asked seemed surprised, and gave them the same answer. But they went from street to street of the city asking the same thing, and attracting much notice by their strange foreign looks and stranger question. Their robes were rich, their saddle-cloths of crimson and blue, fringed with gold ; they had armed servants, and were plainly important men, perhaps princes in their own country, and as they went through the crowded bazaars, all the people of Jerusalem wondered greatly at them. When night came, they looked, but there was no star, nor the next night, and they remained in Jerusalem searching the city day after day.

Some one told the king about the strange visitors who had come to the city, saying that the young Christ was born King, and for whom they were searching everywhere. Now Herod was a wicked cruel king who thought his friends were always plotting to make some one else king, and when he heard what these men were saying he was greatly troubled, and ordered his Council of chief priests and councillors to meet him at his palace. He believed, and the priests also believed, and taught, that the Christ would one day be born and save the people, for it was so written in the Bible which the priests kept.

“Where is the Christ to be born?” the king demanded, when his Councillors were standing before him.

“In Bethlehem of Judæa,” they replied at once, for they all knew, and sending for the Bible, they unrolled it carefully

at the book of Micah, and read to the king the following words which had been written seven hundred years before :

“ But thou, *Bethlehem* Ephratah,
Which art little among the families of Judah,
Out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be
Ruler in Israel ;
Whose goings forth are from of old, from ancient days.”

And had the king been a right Jew, he would have known these words also.

The old white-haired king sat frowning in silence, for he was thinking of a plan to destroy Jesus. Dismissing the Council, he sent a messenger to the wise men to say that the king wished to see them. Putting on their best robes, they hurried up in the afternoon to the king's palace on Mount Zion, expecting that he would show them the Baby-King. His palace was of white marble looking down from the hillside across the city, and was surrounded with lovely gardens and fountains, and was even more gorgeously ornamented with gold and coloured stones than the Temple itself ; and they were taken through a splendid hall and into a private room, where they bowed themselves to the ground before the old, sickly, and gloomy king. With apparent kindness he asked them many questions about why they had come to Jerusalem, and they told him of the star, and what they believed about the coming Christ, and their presents. Frowning more deeply, the king asked them particularly *when* this star appeared ; for the wicked old man guessed that Jesus would be born about the same time ; and the men told him the exact day. After thinking again, the king looked up and, pretending to be very friendly, told them they would find the young Christ in Bethlehem, which was not far off, and to go thither as his messengers, saying—

“ Go and search out carefully all about the young Child ; and when you have found Him, come back and tell me, that I also may come and worship Him.”

“ What a good old king ! how much better than he looks,”

they thought, as they bowed and retired from the room. They did not know that he was telling lies, and intended to kill Jesus.

It was evening when they came down the marble steps of King Herod's palace, and there, low down before them in the sky, was the red star again. Mounting their camels at once, they rode out of the city by the Bethlehem Gate, in which direction the star was shining, out into the dim country roads, and up among the dark hills ; and in the silent night, broken only by the tinkling of their silver camel-bells, they followed the star over hill and hollow and along green slopes fragrant with the scent of blossoming trees and sweet-smelling wild flowers, for Spring had come again, until from the shepherds' plains, they saw clearly in the moonlight the white walls of Bethlehem on the hill ; and the star seemed to shine over one corner of it, and they stopped there.

As soon as the gates were opened in the morning the wise men rode in, and the villagers wondered at them. They asked no questions now, but went up the main street talking together, until they came to a particular house, which they had marked as the one over which the star had seemed to rest last night. It looked a very humble house for a King ; but they got down from their camels, and ordered their servants to unpack their presents of gold, and frankincense and myrrh in parcels, and when all was ready they opened the door of the house and went in.

There they found Mary and Joseph, for that was the house where they lived, and the good wise men knelt down in their strange robes before the little Child in Mary's arms, and worshipped Him as the young Christ, and taking their gold, and rich sweet spices, they laid them on the floor before Him, as presents from their far country. Having worshipped the Child, they rested and took food, and told Joseph and Mary about the star and about King Herod, and of their great and deep joy that Jesus the Christ was born. That night they slept in Bethlehem, intending to return and tell King Herod next day ; but as they slept they dreamt that they were not

to tell him that they had found Jesus. And when the morning came, telling Joseph of their dream, they rode off, and instead of turning back to Jerusalem, they went on past Hebron and away, returning to their own country by another road. So that it was strangers from a distance who first came to worship Jesus, and in them was the Spirit of God.

And as oft as thou lookest at the shining stars at night, thick as daisies on a summer meadow, the same stars on which those wise men looked so long ago, remember the beautiful story of the red star of Bethlehem.

THE FLIGHT TO EGYPT.

BETHLEHEM, SPRING, A.D. I.

Joseph and Mary intended to stay a little longer in Bethlehem, and then return to their home in Nazareth ; but the night after the wise men went away, Joseph had a dream which frightened him. He had been thinking of King Herod's message, he knew that he was a cruel king, and that night he again dreamt that an angel stood at his bedside.

"Rise, and take the young Child and His mother," the angel said, "and fly into Egypt, and remain there until I tell thee, for King Herod will seek Jesus to kill Him."

Awaking with a start, Joseph roused Mary and told her that they must fly at once, for he believed the dream was a message from God. Lighting a lamp, they dressed themselves and prepared to start without delay, for they knew that once in Egypt, King Herod could not touch them. Mary was brave, and gathering together the clothing of Jesus, and His presents, and their own things, she was soon ready ; while Joseph saddled the ass, putting their money into the saddle-bags, with a little food and water, and taking thick cloaks to protect them, and his stout staff. Gently lifting the sleeping Child from His cot, Mary hid Him under her cloak, and, without telling any one whither they were going, they left the quiet house, closing the door on their sleeping friends, so that their flight might not be known ; and putting Mary, muffled

in her cloak, on the ass's back, Joseph led it down the village street, making as little noise as possible. They had to rouse the sleeping watchman at the gate in the village walls, who opened it and let them out, and soon they were on the road, past Hebron, which the wise men had taken only the day before.

The stars were shining in the blue sky as Mary looked up at Bethlehem for the last time, and Joseph, taking the bridle in his hand, urged the ass into a quick trot, seeing the road by the light of the moon, and running by its side, in order to get as far away from the village as he could before daylight came. Active and strong, he walked only to gain breath and run again, for the life of his precious Child depended on his running. Egypt was a long way off—about eighty miles in a straight line—the road going along the ridge of the hills then down from the hills to plains and the sea-shore, and while Joseph kept off the main road as much as possible, for fear of being overtaken by King Herod's messengers, it served as a guide to him.

It was now early Spring, the time of flowers and green grass; and when they saw the day dawning in gold fringed clouds and kindling with rose upon the dim range of the distant hills of Moab, the grey lark caroled in the sky, and Mary rejoiced, for they were quite out of sight of Bethlehem, lost among hills, and miles upon their way. As the daylight made the country clear around them Joseph led the ass off the hard white road, into the bridle-paths that wound through the green passes in the hills. From each rising ground they saw ever nearer and nearer the great blue Mediterranean Sea, towards which they toiled, and once across the wide Philistine plains, its shores would guide them further on their way.

Noontide found them resting under the shade of a thick green tree, in a secluded hollow by a stream, taking their mid-day meal, with wild lilies of red and gold, purple poppies and scarlet anemones springing round them; and in the afternoon, when the heat grew less, they hastened on again, till darkness caused them to ask for shelter at some house, which

was never refused. Each day spent in hurrying over rough roads, climbing hills, seeking by-paths, and crossing brooks, made their minds easier, for there was less and less chance of their being pursued and captured by King Herod ; and every day brought them nearer to the line between the two countries, over which, they would be safe under the protection of the King of Egypt.

A river ran between the countries, and in less than a week from the night when they scrambled in haste down the steep path from Bethlehem, the shaggy ass carried Mary and Jesus over the shallow ford of the river and safely into Egypt. Oft on that journey had they kept away from villages, lest their pursuer might hear which way they had gone ; oft had they thought that persons seen on the hills behind them, were King Herod's soldiers ; oft had they feared to rest, lest they might be overtaken and captured. It had been a flight full of terrors to the young mother ; but at last the slow-footed ass, tired, patient, covered with dust, stood on foreign ground, and Mary's precious Child was safe, and she thanked God.

They did not remain long close to Palestine, but taking the public road without fear, they journeyed on into Egypt, sleeping in strange villages, buying food of strange people, no longer in a hurry, looking about them for a place to stop at, among people who spoke another language, and who wore curious foreign dresses, quite different from their own ; Joseph then found the benefit of the gold and the presents of the wise men. Carpenters are of use in any land, and Joseph was not long in getting work that he could do, hammering and sawing, making waggons, ploughs, and saddles, or whatever the people wanted ; and fixing on a good place, he took, or perhaps built, a little house for Mary, and prepared to wait and work in that strange country until they got a message to return home again.

And thou wilt remember that Jesus was only a little Baby when His young mother had to rise with Him in the night and fly from Bethlehem for fear of the cruel King Herod.

KING HEROD AND THE CHILDREN.

BETHLEHEM, SPRING, A.D. I.

King Herod looked out from his palace windows, looking for the return of the wise men; and as day after day went past and they did not come, he grew impatient. Sending to Bethlehem, he found that they had left for their own country some days ago, and this made him very angry. A week had gone by, a precious week! for by that time Jesus and His mother were safe in Egypt. Had the king sent soldiers with the wise men, he might have taken Jesus; but by trying to deceive them, and waiting for their return, he provided the very delay which favoured His escape. King Herod was the most cruel king that ever reigned in Jerusalem, killing everyone whom he suspected, even his own three sons, and his beautiful wife Mariamne; and when he found that he had been slighted and befooled by the wise men, he resolved to do a horrible thing, to slay little Jesus; and in order to make certain that He should not escape, he formed this cruel plan. The wise men had told him that the young Christ was not yet six months old. They might be wrong however, and, to satisfy his rage, the king resolved to kill every baby boy in Bethlehem, or near it, who was two years old or under that age.

Calling the captain of his guard, he commanded him to send soldiers at once to Bethlehem to do this dreadful thing; and if a single child escaped, the captain would pay for it with his own life. The stern officer, in his rich dress and burnished armour, had received many dreadful commands from this feeble king of seventy years of age, but never a command so cruel as this; and, bowing low, he retired, perhaps considering as he went whether he would not give up his office rather than obey such a wicked order. But going to an officer under him, he told him the king's command, and bade him take a small band of soldiers and carry it out at once.

The soldiers marched out from the king's palace and its lovely gardens, down into the town and out through the city

gate into the quiet country road, and over the hills to Bethlehem, the sun glancing yellow on their brass-crested helmets, and flashing blue from their short sharp swords, their tread raising a cloud of dust behind them. As they neared Bethlehem, the country people, shepherds, gardeners, farmers, came out of their cottages, or stood in the fields where the oleander bushes were crowned thick as flowering thorn trees with rosy blossoms, to look at the king's soldiers, wondering why they had come, and feeling safe in their protection ; and the soldiers smiled under their grim helmets when the little children, clapping their hands and shouting at the sight of their flashing and jingling arms, came running along beside them to imitate their stride, crushing with their bare feet the red anemones in the grass. The soldiers laughed, for they did not know why they were going to Bethlehem.

Halting under the village, the officer told them the command of the king, that they were to go into every house in Bethlehem, and into each house in the country round about, and slay every baby boy who was two years old or under, sparing none. The soldiers were filled with disgust. Had they armed themselves with breastplate, shield, and spear to slay babes ! And some who had little lisping children of their own, felt inclined to fling down their swords and leave the king's army, rather than obey such a cruel order, and let old King Herod come and slay the sweet babes himself ; far rather would they have marched into the thick of battle, than turn their swords upon the defenceless breasts of tottering children. An awful thing about soldiers is, that they are trained to obey, and not to think whether the thing they are told to do is right or is wrong ; until they get to believe that it is right and noble to obey any, and every order, and slay or spare, just as they are told. This is called military discipline ; and these poor men thought that they were somehow doing their duty when, with sullen faces and rebellious hearts, they dispersed over the country and into the village to obey the king's wicked command. Soon the streets were ringing with the cries of mothers running to and fro, thinking that their children were

all to be slain, as the grim soldiers went from house to house, sword in hand ; and peaceful Bethlehem, which that morning had smiled with sunshine on its doors, was suddenly filled with gloom and mourning.

It is all over. Forming their band again, the sullen soldiers marched rapidly away from the sorrowing village and the peaceful, beautiful vale of Mamre, cursing their king and blaming him for what they had done, back to the crowded town, back to the rich gardens and the splendid palace. And the officer went up the white stairs, and through the marble pillars and over the coloured pavement, and was ushered by black slaves into the king's presence ; and there, old, white, his misery mocked by a golden crown and a purple robe, upon a chair of ivory and gold, with richly embroidered curtains behind him, sat Herod, the man-fiend, the child-slayer.

In answer to his stern question, the officer replied that he had executed his commands. Had any escaped ? "No, not one." The king felt relieved, satisfied, almost happy ; and as he signed to the officer to go away, a grim smile passed over his white face, for he thought that he had defeated the wise men, put an end to another danger, and even foiled the purposes of God, by killing the Christ in infancy. And perhaps the murder of these innocents gave him a little quiet sleep that night.

There is a very beautiful picture painted by a good, child-loving Englishman, Holman Hunt, called "The Triumph of the Innocents." In a lovely group these little children of Bethlehem, with flower-wreaths on their heads, some of crimson roses, some of purple pansies and red poppies, with flower-ropes in their hands and twining arms, are pressing to the side of the ass that carries Mary and her Child into Egypt, while the Boy Jesus stretches out hands to them with a look of joy and welcome in His perfectly beautiful face. It is a picture full of the perfection of child-life, a vision of the children of Heaven, and teaches what I wish thee to remember, that neither kings nor sword-blades can mar the triumph of innocence over cruelty and wrong.

THE RETURN TO NAZARETH.

EGYPT, SPRING, A.D. 2.

Jesus was about a year in Egypt. He was carried in his mother's arms and on her back for months, then His little naked feet were put to the ground, and He learnt to walk, and His young mother was His constant joyful companion. Joseph easily found work as a carpenter, and, with the presents from the wise men, he would buy hammer, saw and axe, chisels and wedges, and resume his old work of box, plough, and furniture-maker for the farmers and villagers, living in a small house which Mary kept bright and clean, meeting him with little Jesus every night when he came home. And so month after month went joyfully past in that little cottage in Egypt, but it was different in King Herod's splendid palace.

Attacked by a terrible disease, the old king tried hot baths in sulphur springs by the Dead Sea, sea breezes by the Mediterranean, and the finest food and fruit that could be got ; but he could not get any sleep. Death came slowly and with great pain in a magnificent palace which he had built in Jericho, and to which he had gone in the hope of feeling better amid the green feathery palms, rose gardens, and perfume plantations of that loveliest of his cities. He lay in a splendid bed, hung with richly embroidered curtains ; doctors came and looked at him, and went away shaking their heads, for they could do nothing for him, although he offered them gold and jewels to take away his pain. Messengers came and went with hushed steps, for the whole land was waiting, was wishing for his death. One April morning it was whispered in his chamber, whispered through the palace, and carried out into the street that the king was dead ; and every one said it was good news, for he was hated, although he had reigned thirty-seven years, and built the Golden Temple.

King Herod dead ! The news was brought by merchants into Egypt. It would soon be safe for them to return home ; and one night Joseph had another dream. Again an angel seemed to stand beside him, and say—

“Rise and take the young Child and His mother, and return to thine own country ; for they are dead who sought His life,” and the angel departed, and Joseph told his dream to Mary ; and they were glad of the king’s death.

They did not need to hurry. Joseph would sell all the things which they could not carry back with them to Bethlehem, and saddling their ass, and bidding farewell to the people who had been kind to them, they started for home, never to return to Egypt. What a different journey from the last, when Mary had to fly in the night-time with her Babe, leaving everything behind ; but now she returned with a little laughing dark-eyed Boy, who could walk a short way on the soft grass in the Summer sunshine. They would travel with other people, who were going up to Jerusalem by the well-known merchants’ road, Mary telling her lisping, wondering Child how lovely was their own country of hill and hollow, tree and flower, and how pretty their vine-covered home. Travelling easily, at the rate of the camels of the merchants loaded with goods, they rested at noon, for it was Summer time, the weather was very hot, and the grass withering ; and soon Jesus looked for the first time on the boundless blue sea, heaving and sparkling in the sunshine.

In a week’s time they were within sight of the brown and white hills of Hebron ; in a day or two more they hoped to be in Bethlehem ; and everywhere they were told that King Herod was dead, and that Archelaus his son was now king. But they also heard that he had already slain a great number of men, and this made Joseph afraid to go up to Bethlehem, it being so near to Jerusalem, where the king lived. Now Archelaus was king over all the country of Judæa round about Jerusalem ; and although Joseph thought it was not safe to go to Bethlehem he believed that the angel meant him to go thither. But one night he dreamed again that he was not to go to Bethlehem, nor to stay anywhere in Judæa ; and in the morning he decided to keep out of the country of King Archelaus, and return to their old home at Nazareth, in Galilee, which belonged to another king called Antipas.

Travelling on for a few days more by the side of the sea, along the beautiful plains of Philistia and Sharon, they turned upwards to climb the wooded Carmel hills which looked down on the rich plain of Esdraelon and across to Nazareth. The plain was green with waving grain, and the trees were in full leaf round the villages, and sweet with the rich perfume of the orange and almond blossom, as they walked along the bridle-path of hard earth that led to the mouth of the vale of Nazareth. At length they reach the steep path that winds up the side of the valley towards the village. Mary sees again the tall trees, the sweet profusion of wild flowers which specially mark the lovely spot where the village spring is, then the walls of the village come into view, and soon the ass's feet are clattering over the stones of the street. There is her mother's house, with the vine spreading along the white wall and climbing over the low roof, and her garden of flowers!—at last she is home again, safe among friends, with her precious Child!

The ass was let loose to frisk without his saddle-bags, and Mary entered her mother's house, there to remain till their own home was ready for them. And thither all the neighbours would gather, to hear her story, and look at her lovely Boy, with His ruddy cheeks and yellow hair, who was just able to walk with the help of her hand. In a few days she was in her own little house again. And Joseph returned to his workshop and, gathering his tools, resumed sawing, hammering, making and mending, as though he had not been absent from his bench one day during the long months that had passed, for he did not intend to leave Nazareth again. A happy life seemed opening before them and their bright little Child, among green encircling hills that sheltered them and seemed to shut out the lower world, its kings and soldiers.

And thou wilt remember why Jesus was taken thither, for He lived so long in Nazareth after this, that people said He was born there and not in Bethlehem; but He was indeed a little Boy able to walk and talk, and pluck wild flowers when He first came to Nazareth.

CHILDHOOD IN NAZARETH.

NAZARETH, A.D. 2 TO 12.

To His mother, every month made a difference in her beautiful Boy. From walking, holding by her hand, He quickly went to walking alone, and then to running, and His little baby syllables passed almost unnoticed into words and sentences. Wherever His mother went, He went with her, holding by her skirt and asking questions about clouds, the sun, flowers, birds, bees, and running off to chase butterflies ; and she used to take Him into the woods, where, guided by the sound of His father's axe, they found Joseph cutting down a tree, or lopping off the branches. He went with His mother to the well, and was delighted on looking in, to see His own sweet baby-face looking up at Him from the dark water, and when the water came sparkling up in her pitcher He had to have a drink before starting for home. Thus Summer passed into Winter, and Winter into Summer, marked to Him chiefly by the coming and the fading away of the leaves and the sweet field-flowers.

As years went by, little brothers and sisters were born, and Jesus learned to play by Himself, while His mother took care of them. Dressed in a white tunic, with bare legs, feet, and head, He ran about in the sunshine, plucking flowers and berries for His little brothers, and His mother rejoiced to see how gentle and loving He was with them. And in the evenings, when His father came home and the red sun went down behind the purple hills, He would go up to the cool flat roof of the house and listen to wonderful Bible stories about King David the shepherd-boy, and Solomon the wise king, and the little child Samuel, who lived with the old priest in the Tabernacle. And when the moon rose, and the stars came out in glorious array in the deep blue sky, He was told about His Father in Heaven, whose Son He was ; and Joseph also taught Him His letters, His lesson-book being the Bible, from which alone little children were taught.

When He was six years of age, He went with His father to the village church, and heard the solemn prayers, and reading, and singing on Sabbaths and on Thursdays ; and then He went to school, to sit with other little boys in a ring upon the floor, and repeat Bible verses after the teacher, until He knew them off by heart. But He learnt far more in the open fields, for there the clouds, stars, wind, flowers, trees, all taught Him. His little brothers were called James, Joses, Jude, and Simon, but His sisters' names are not known ; and with them and His cousins, James and John, and the other village children, He would run races on the grass, and play games round the houses, their little bodies barely covered by loose white and blue tunics in Summer, and in Winter by little lamb-skins with holes for their arms. And when He stood, with the children joining hands and dancing round Him, Mary would look from a distance, and sigh as she saw His joyful face. He was a thorough Child, who could tumble on the green at sundown with His companions, and gather in a group with them and chatter till bed time, as only children do. His school lessons were no easier to Him than to other children. He grew tired with running, and others could run as fast as He ; but He was always happy,—a perfect Child.

As a Boy, He was obedient to His father and mother, and never grieved to do what they told Him. Taking His little brothers into the fields and along the hedges, He would show them the small bird's nest under the green leaves or in the dry grass with spotted eggs lying among the brown moss, and would tell them that the little bird that had flown away would soon return again. At eight years of age He could fetch water from the well for His mother, and help His father a little in His workshop, handing him the tools he needed, and running his messages ; and in the evening He would gather the chips of wood and shavings into a corner, and put the tools away into their places. Happy years ! perhaps the happiest of His life, when all the world seemed beautiful and good, and taught Him so much ; His father so wise, His mother so loving, looking at Him at times with eyes so gentle

and so sad, that He had to run to her side and ask if He had grieved her. But great thoughts began to rise in His young mind, and doubts, as to whether all the world was so happy as He thought ; and why His little brothers could at times be disobedient, and wilful, and angry ; and why some children had so much pain, and some looked so old and sad. And when these thoughts like clouds passed over His clear mind, He would ask His father about them but could not understand his answers ; His mother seemed to know better what He wanted. Who was His Father in Heaven, to whom she bade Him pray ? Could He see Him ? Could He hear Him ? And yet every time He prayed He was happier, and felt sure that His Father in Heaven was watching Him and helping Him to think and to understand. And so the years fled past, and from a tottering Child He grew to be a tall, thoughtful, dark-eyed Boy.

And thou my child, be happy ! for thou wilt never be more like the young Jesus than thou art now. If Thou dost obey thy father and mother, and art gentle to thy little brothers and sisters, and lovest clouds, flowers, animals, and all beautiful things, and dost pray to thy Father in Heaven to make thee good, then thou wilt be like one of the little children written of in the beautiful hymn, which says :—

And such the child, whose early feet
The paths of peace have trod,
Whose secret heart, with influence sweet
Is upward drawn to God.

HIS FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

JERUSALEM, APRIL, A.D. 13.

Many Summers and Winters had come and gone with their flowers and their snows around Nazareth, and the boy Jesus was nearing manhood. He was now twelve years of age, tall, strong, beautiful, for boys grow up much sooner in that country than in England ; and He was said to be old enough now to read the

Bible for Himself, and to be called a "son of the Law." The phylacteries, which are little parchment boxes full of verses of the Bible, had been tied upon His left arm and brow in the village church, as a sign that He was of age to think for Himself, and go to the great religious Festivals at Jerusalem.

It was April, and the great seven days Festival, called the Passover, was near, to which everybody should go, and for the first time Jesus was to go, with His father and mother, away beyond the hills, with crowds of people, to the great city—a memorable event for a boy. Everywhere the people had been preparing for it for weeks past, sorting the roads, mending the bridges, and making new clothes and sandals, and cutting fresh sticks, for it was the most joyful Festival of the year. With much stir the company from Nazareth, all in their bright holiday dresses, got ready their horses, camels, and asses, for some one went from every house ; and in the early morning, Mary riding on the ass, and Jesus, stick in hand, walking joyfully by His father's side, they started, winding down the broad highland valley, with green fields spreading away, and the bright Spring wild-flowers nodding in the breeze by the roadside ; while from the thick hedges came the song of birds. A bend in the road, and the white houses of the village were hidden from view, and soon, a joyful company, singing glad songs to the music of the timbrel, pipe, and drum, they marched across the rich plain of Esdraelon. Resting at noonday under green trees, in the afternoon they started refreshed, and travelled until evening, when white tents were put up and the evening meal prepared. Tired with walking, Jesus was soon asleep, but with the first light of day the march was resumed ; and as they went along the great public roads, they were joined by bands of people from other villages, all marching to the same Festival at Jerusalem.

The fourth day was the greatest of all, for then they came within sight of Jerusalem. Having toiled up the wild, hot, rugged road from Jericho, they climbed the Mount of Olives, and then Joseph would tell Jesus to look out for the most glorious sight in the world ; and as they followed the bend of

the road round the shoulder of the hill, suddenly the great city in all its magnificence appeared, like a dream before them. It seemed quite near, on an opposite lower hill, with a deep ravine between, and Jesus could see it all. There, stood the great thick walls, with their square towers of defence ; there, the marble palaces of kings, priests, and governors ; there, the forts and castles for soldiers. But the sun shone most brightly on the Temple, which was on the side of the city nearest to Jesus, like a mighty cathedral on a wall of white, built up from the ravine below—colonnades, cloisters, porches, pillars, arches, and outer buildings all of white marble ; while within the great open square stood the Holy place, terrace rising above terrace in white and gold, and high above all was the roof of bright gold reflecting the sun. With a shout, the company from Nazareth burst into a joyous song, waving green branches as they came over the hill, Jesus singing with the rest, for truly this was the most glorious sight the Boy had ever seen. And He gazed at it as they descended the hillside, towards the bridge across the Kedron, near to which green slope of Olivet the people from Galilee pitched their tents for the night, for they did not intend to live in the city, which was already crowded with people.

In the morning, as soon as the silver trumpets of the priests sounded from Mount Moriah, His father and mother took Jesus into the city, through the streets, and up to the Temple, pointing out to Him its great brass and silver doors and coloured marble pillars as they entered, and in the inner court, the altars and the sacrifices ; while His father told Him what the hundreds of white-robed priests and Levites were doing, and why a magnificent coloured curtain hung over the door of the Holy place, up to which none but the priests might go. Among the pillars in the great outer porches, He saw the aged teachers sitting, with people standing round them listening to them as they taught and answered questions. Day after day the boy Jesus went up to these courts crowded with gaily dressed people from all parts of the country, and took part in the responses and singing, and

listened earnestly to the old doctors of the law, teaching from the Bible, for they were the greatest Teachers in the land, and soon He would have to go back to quiet Nazareth again. He would meet His cousin John there also, who, like Him, would be old enough to come to his first Festival.

Every day brought something new of which He had often heard. The great Temple court was hung with beautiful mats and carpets of all colours, and on the first day of the Festival, the greatest day of all, at a signal given by the blowing of rams' horns, He saw lambs being slain in thousands upon the coloured pavement of the Priests' Court, and their blood poured from golden bowls at the foot of the high stone altar. And on that first night, He ate the Passover supper of bitter herbs and roasted lamb, and drank the wine and water, and chanted the solemn psalms at His father's side as He had often done before. On the second day of the Festival He saw the first sheaf of barley cut on the other side of the Kedron and carried in triumph into the city amid the shouts of the people, to be threshed and ground into flour and presented as an offering of first fruits in the Temple. The third day was a Sabbath of rest and quiet, with splendid Temple services from singing choirs and instruments ; but the fourth, fifth, and sixth days were days of rejoicing, dancing, singing, feasting, buying, selling, and seeing friends, on which days those who had come from a distance began to leave Jerusalem and go home again. The seventh and last day of the Festival was also kept as a Sabbath, although most of the country people had left by that time. But every day He was in Jerusalem, and went to hear the old Teachers in the Temple, for what they said was more to Him than all the priests, and sacrifices, and singing.

And thou wilt remember that Jesus first went from home when He was twelve years of age, and that He went to the great Passover Festival at the Golden Temple.

THE TEACHERS IN THE TEMPLE.

JERUSALEM, APRIL, A.D. 13.

By the fourth day, the greater part of the Festival was over, and in the grey morning, before the first rays of the sun had touched the Temple's golden roof, the white tents of the Galileans on the slopes of Olivet were taken down and strapped upon camels, and when the rosy dawn lit up the Hebron hills the band from Nazareth was wending its way homewards over the quiet Mount of Olives. Jesus, being a strong and quick Boy, had been allowed, during the Festival days, to go and come from the Temple as he wished, and He did not care to go anywhere else.

The Nazareth people, having far to go, left at the beginning of the half-holidays, on that fourth day, and after marching down the steep road to the plains near the beautiful town of Jericho, they were about to stop for the first night when Mary recollected that she had not seen Jesus since the morning, and asked His father if he had seen Him ; but Joseph answered that he had not. Mary did not doubt, however, that Jesus was with the other children, and made inquiry for Him, but every one she asked said they had not seen the Boy since they started. Getting alarmed, she ran through the whole company of the people, asking for Him, but could not find Him anywhere. Jesus was lost ! and at once all sorts of wild fears rushed into her mind. Perhaps He had fainted by the way, and was lying on the wild Jericho road, and Mary wept, as Joseph and she hurried back to look for their Boy. They asked every person they met if they had seen Jesus, but no one knew anything about Him. Oh ! why had she been so careless of Him in the confusion and darkness of starting ? Perhaps He had gone with the wrong band, and was now far away on another road !

Next day His father and mother were back at Jerusalem, searching among the tents and in the city, sorrowing as they

went ; but they could get no tidings of Jesus. They went up to the Temple and inquired among the stalls where things were sold, among the crowds who watched the priests or listened to the Levites and the white-robed boys singing on the steps of the priests' court ; but Jesus was not there. Another anxious day went past, and on the third day they were again in the Temple, seeking Him, among the richly ornamented porches where the old Teachers sat on bright carpets, looking out upon the court of the Gentiles, and teaching all who came. Mary's heart beat fast. There ! there He was ! with His bright little holiday jacket which she had made Him, standing among a group of men, listening with beautiful earnest face to all that was being said. She drew near and listened, and to her surprise heard His sweet Boy's voice putting earnest questions to the old Teachers, questions which seemed to puzzle and annoy them as He stood with His ruddy face and clear dark eyes waiting for an answer. And when the Teachers did reply, it was with many words in very long sentences, to which Jesus listened quietly until they were done, when to her amazement He put more short simple questions, which these greatest Teachers in the land seemed to find it difficult to answer, for they whispered together, and looked at slips of paper, and opened large rolls of old brown parchment, which were carried about on sticks, and still they could not satisfy Him. And all who stood by were astonished at the answers of Jesus whenever the old Teachers asked Him a question, for they had never met any one with such wisdom and understanding as this beautiful Boy. Mary was deeply moved with what she saw, and bending forward, she stood looking earnestly at Jesus, till at length He saw her, and at a sign came over to her.

"Son, why hast Thou done so with us," she said in a low earnest voice, "for Thy father and I have sought for Thee sorrowing?" She thought He would know of all their fears and sorrows. But He answered innocently—

"How is it that you looked for Me? Do you not know that I must be in My heavenly Father's house?" But He

came away with her, leaving the old Teachers whispering over their parchments and papers, wondering who He was.

His mother did not quite understand His answer, for He meant that they should have known to look for Him in His favourite place in the Temple ; but she thought of the words of the angel long ago, and knew that her Boy of twelve was already preparing for the great life which was before Him, and she pondered much over what she had seen that day. And as they walked home to Nazareth, He told them that He had been to the Temple every day while they were away, and where He had slept at night. And, following the Nazareth band, they were home not many days after them.

What a memorable visit ! He went away a country Boy, and returned with a knowledge of the great Temple and its strange, grand services, and a feeling that for Him there was more learning out under the bright stars and among the calm green hills, than in that crowded Temple and among its confused and unsatisfying Teachers ; and He rejoiced that He lived in a cottage in a flowery glen, and not in a crowded city.

And thou wilt remember the fair-haired, red-cheeked country Boy as he stood unconfused and unafraid before the old Teachers, astonishing them with His wisdom and His innocence ; for there is not a child but can teach great lessons to the wisest of men, if he be gentle and good.

HE LEARNS TO BE A CARPENTER.

NAZARETH, A.D. 13 TO 31.

Jesus had much to tell His brothers and sisters of what He saw at the great Festival in Jerusalem, for they were all too young to go to a Festival : of the silver trumpets, the white-robed singing boys, the smoking sacrifices, and something also of what He had heard from the old Teachers during the three days when He was alone.

But now He had to study the Bible, and His daily task

for the next year or two was to learn off by heart the lessons which His teacher set Him. And so He got to know His Bible thoroughly. Children had to sing psalms at all times of rejoicing, and thus He learnt to sing. He also learnt to write, but His writing was in strange figures, practised with a sharp stick on smooth sand on the ground, more like printing. And it is likely that before He finished learning, He knew something of three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic; but Aramaic was the one which He spoke. His amusements were now those of the older boys, hill-climbing, nest-finding, and games of strength and skill, and going messages for His parents. But at length the time came when He had to give up the school and play, and begin to work. In that country boys soon grow up to be men, and in a year after His visit to Jerusalem Jesus was thirteen, and then He was looked upon as a young man, who had to choose what He would be, for every boy had to learn a trade. Thou mayest think that Jesus had no need for a trade, or if He chose one, it would be that of a teacher. But what trade did He choose? A gardener, a shepherd, a sailor, a carpenter, a smith? He chose to be what His father was, a carpenter. That seems hard work for such a Boy? Wouldst thou like to be a carpenter, to rise early and go to bed late, and work all day among rough wood? But He was not afraid of hard work, nor should any boy be, if it be useful work. So, when He was about fourteen Jesus left school, and went to be His father's apprentice, to learn how to use the saw and the axe, the chisel and the hammer. And then He learnt how to cut down trees, hew off the branches, and carry the wood to the workshop, and saw it into planks and blocks, out of which to make houses, boats, oars, boxes, tables, benches, ploughs, yoking for oxen, saddles, and every kind of wooden thing that was wanted. This He found hard and difficult, for at first He got the coarser work to do, while His father finished it off neatly, and His arms were not so strong as a man's arms. His first duty was to do whatever His father told Him, and as He loved His father, thou mayest feel sure He learnt quickly.

Take a peep into the open workshop at Nazareth on this warm Summer day. There is the rough bench in the middle, to work on, with the tools scattered over it. Planks of wood are piled up at one side to dry, and the floor is strewn with shavings, and sawdust, and spales, and ends of wood. Bending at the bench is Joseph the father, with brown face and strong arms, fitting pieces together into the shape of a box, and knocking them close with a heavy wooden mallet. On the other side of the bench is the tall beautiful form of the Youth Jesus, with His sweet gentle face so like His mother's, watching closely all that His father does, now holding the wood to steady it, and now handing him the tool that he requires; or going away to measure a plank and cut off a piece of the right size, and bring it to him. The sun beats warmly upon the roof of the shed, and as the wind blows through, it stirs the shavings and cools the workers. Is it not a pleasant sight? The strong man and the beautiful Youth, father and Son, working cheerfully together, Jesus helping His father to make enough money to buy bread and clothes for the little brothers and sisters, and gentle mother at home. In that shed they work until the evening, and when it grows too dark to see, the sound of the hammer ceases, the saw is laid aside, the work stops for another day, and they walk down the village street home to the evening meal which Mary has prepared. Work like this is good, and thou, my child, whether thou art rich or poor, prince or peasant, shouldst learn to do rough work when a boy, nor think that working with thy hands, which is the hardest and commonest of work, is too mean for thee to do, for Jesus did it.

Day after day, year after year, Summer and Winter found Jesus at this work, out fresh and early in the morning, and returning tired at night, but happy with having done His best. When His father was not busy He had hours and days to Himself in which He went where He pleased. And once every year, in the Spring time, He went again with His father to the great Passover Festival at Jerusalem, where He would often meet His cousin John from Hebron, and when His

brothers were old enough they went with Him. He also went to some of the other Festivals there, and never missed going to the Golden Temple. And every Sabbath day and many Thursdays also, He went to the village church in Nazareth, and took part in the worship.

When He had leisure from His work, He loved to walk among the gardens, fields, and vineyards in the valley of Nazareth, learning all He could, for He was fond of flowers, and talked with the gardeners who were training the roses, lilies, and hollyhocks, tending the vines and olives, and pruning the orange and fig and apple trees. In Spring He marked the flowers which first appeared, the crocus, hyacinth, and white wild rose, and saw them increasing in number and in colour as they spread their red and yellow and purple blooms over the fields and hedges, and He watched them fade and wither away in the parching heat of Summer. He saw, too, the farmers ploughing and breaking up the ground, and scattering the wheat and barley seed, and noticed how the birds flew down and pecked up what fell on the hard footpaths through the fields, and saw the countless tangled weeds, that gave so much trouble. Sometimes He walked down to the Lake-side and saw the sailors fishing, and the storms of wind that suddenly lashed the water into hissing waves. And when He walked among the thymy hills, He marked the long-eared sheep following their shepherd, and running to him when he called; and saw him, when a little lamb was too weak to walk, carrying it in his arms. Often, too, He saw the dawn stealing over the sky, flushing the grey clouds with rose, and fringing them with saffron; and watched the gathering clouds of evening changing from crimson to purple, as they rested above the hills where the sun had gone down, and often, too, He waited out in the dark silent valley, until the red planets and sparkling stars came out into the violet sky.

Year after year went by, the Youth became a Man, and at twenty years of age He had learnt His trade of a carpenter, and was full grown and strong, and able to lift as heavy

weights as His father ; and it is thought by some that His father died about this time. Then Jesus came to be called the Carpenter of Nazareth. And as He grew older He increased in wisdom.

Amid the quiet of the hills He meditated much upon the life that was before Him, and upon the ways of men. Many things perplexed, and some things grieved Him. He heard the religious Teachers saying that the people could only be good by believing their words and obeying their commands. And they laid so many rules upon the people that they were oppressed beyond endurance, for their Teachers had something which they said they should do every hour of the day or night, so that if a man were to try to obey all they said, he would have time for nothing else. He saw that these were false Teachers and false priests, who made it quite impossible for men to be what they called good ; and that they did not do themselves what they ordered the people to do. This was hateful and wicked, for Jesus knew that to be good was a simple and lovely thing, and not a thing which had ten thousand rules to be remembered and kept, and He thought that He would like to banish these countless rules of men, and teach the simple way to be good that was in His heart. To do this, He would have to give up being a carpenter. And He thought of the Christ written about in the Bible, and whom the people believed would be the Saviour of their nation. But He did not feel that He was ready for this great task.

As He grew older, the state of His fellow-men and their false priests and Teachers almost constantly filled His mind, and He prepared Himself in every way for the time when He should feel called upon to begin this great work as a Teacher of the Truth, and He read and studied the Bible till He knew it all, and read other books also. He loved more than ever to meditate alone in His walks through the fields and among the hills. There He saw the gardeners in their vineyards plucking the purple clusters of ripe grapes and casting them in heaps into their tubs, and crushing the juice from them for wine ; and

there He saw the wheat fields waving with yellow grain ready for harvesting ; and at the Lake-side He saw the fishermen pulling in their nets filled with glittering fishes. And when evening found Him among the hills, and the sun went down and the stars came throbbing out, He felt more than ever alone, and different from other people, and would sit thinking and praying to His Father in Heaven to make plain what He should do.

For fourteen years He worked as a village tradesman, among the hills and fields and country people of Nazareth, until He was thirty, learning lessons from the clouds and wind, seed-time and harvest, and waiting on the will of God. And these, my child, are the best teachers a man can have, if only his mind is open to their deep influence, and he waits in silence upon his Father in Heaven to learn what He wishes him to do.

HE LEAVES NAZARETH.

FORDS OF JORDAN, WINTER, A.D. 31.

His Cousin John, the son of Elizabeth of Hebron, was now a man of over thirty, being six months older than Jesus, and He was of a strange, wild appearance. His tunic was of rough camel's hair, bound round his waist with a leather belt, his face was brown with the sun, his eyes dark and glowing, and his hair hung down on his shoulders, having never been cut. He lived in lonely places, away from the people, had never tasted wine, and a kind of large fly called locusts and wild honey were his food, and at this time he came again among the people, saying that he had this message from God to tell them, that the Christ, the Deliverer of their nation, would shortly appear, and they wondered much at him. He said he had come to fulfil those words written by Isaiah in the Bible long before. That he was—

“The voice of one that crieth in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord !

Make straight in the desert a highway for our God !
Every valley shall be raised, and every mountain and hill
shall be made low,
And the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough
places plain ;
And the glory of God shall be shown, and all men shall
see it together :

For God hath spoken it ! ”

And that he had come to fulfil those words of Malachi also,
in the last book of the Bible.

“ Behold ! I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare
the way before me :

And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall come suddenly to his
Temple,

Even the messenger of the covenant, in whom you
delight :

Behold ! he shall come, saith God.”

On the banks of the river Jordan, not far from Jericho, standing upon a raised place above the people, John spoke daily in the open air with such earnestness, and looked so strange, that crowds came to hear him. Then coming down from the higher ground and wading into the river he baptized all who came to him, bathing them in the water or sprinkling it upon their heads as a sign that they had repented of their wickedness ; which was a common thing for the priests at the temple to do. And his preaching and his message were so strange and stirring that the people of the country began to speak about John, and to call him the Baptist, because of the way he baptized them.

John knew Jesus. Their mothers were friends, and John's mother had told him what a wonderful person Jesus would be, while Jesus had heard of the angel that appeared to John's father, to tell him that his son would be a great Teacher ; but John had been living in lonely places, and they had not met for years. Jesus heard at Nazareth the news that was stirring the people ; that John, His strange cousin, had appeared dressed in camel's-hair raiment, and was

teaching and baptizing at the Fords of Jordan, and telling the people that the Christ would soon appear, and Jesus felt that the time had come when He should give up being a Carpenter and go and teach, for He was now thirty, the age at which the old Teachers at Jerusalem said a young man might begin to teach. What a sorrowful hour would the last be which Jesus spent with His mother! He would tell her that John had been teaching for some time, and that He must go and do His part of the great work of teaching the people, of which He had so often told her.

See her, as she comes with Him out of the little door of their house, along the village street, and down the footpath through the vale. Her hand is on His arm, and the face which she turns to His looks older, for she is forty-five now, though still sweet and beautiful. He is tall and strong and His step firm, as He gently supports His mother, and speaks words of consolation to her. They go by field and hedge till a turn in the path hides them from view. A little later, and the same bend of the road shows a woman's figure returning alone. It is Mary. She walks slowly, and her head is bent as though weeping, for she has parted from her Son, and her heart is full of fears. It is always very sad for a mother when her son leaves her to go out alone into the world, and when thou, my child, art called upon to this, I trust thou wilt treat thy mother with all the tenderness that thy heart can give, for she will need it all.

Jesus was going to join John at the Jordan, as many young men were doing, and it would take Him about three days to walk thither. He was dressed as a young countryman, with a long inner tunic of soft white cloth gathered at the neck and coming down to His feet, and over that a loose cloak of thick grey or blue stuff to wrap round Him in cold weather, and He had common Winter shoes buckled on His feet, and a long stick in His hand. The banks of the Jordan are often high and rocky, but at some parts they are in terraces, coming down to low soft, level parts, overhung with drooping trees, and then the river spreads

out shallow enough for horses to wade through. It was Winter, and the river was deep and full of water flowing cold as ice, and day after day John preached at the same place to fresh crowds.

Another day has begun at the Fords. John is standing upon the terraced bank, with the broad river flowing at his feet, his wild figure showing clear against the blue morning sky, a crowd before him. Lawyers, Pharisees, soldiers, shepherds, fishermen who have walked up from the Lake, gardeners, carpenters, vine-dressers, dyers, weavers, smiths, bankers and beggars, rich and poor, women and children, all listening to the strange young man, who calls upon them to repent of their wickedness and be baptized "there," and he points with bare arm to the river below. He had told them before, that the Christ would soon appear, but to-day he says—

"Among you there standeth One whom ye know not, He that is to come after me, the buckle of whose shoe I am not worthy to unloose." In their midst! And each man looked at his neighbour;—but they would soon know. When John finished speaking he went down into the river again, and baptized all who came to him, which was considered a very solemn thing. While he was doing this a young man, dressed in the plain white tunic and outer cloak of a countryman of Galilee, came from the crowd and stood at the edge of the river, quietly waiting and watching John. He had been in the crowd listening, and now He wished to be baptized. When He came into the water, John looked earnestly at Him, and something told him that this was Jesus the Christ, and he refused to baptize Him, for he knew that Jesus had no wickedness to confess.

"I need rather to be baptized by Thee," he exclaimed in a voice of astonishment, "and comest Thou to me?"

"Allow it now," Jesus replied quietly; "for it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

Then John baptized Him, and as Jesus went up out of the water He prayed, and the Heavens were opened to Him, and

He saw the Spirit of God coming down in the shape of a Dove, and it rested upon His head, abiding with Him: John saw it also, and the Voice of God spoke to Jesus from Heaven, saying—

“Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.” I know not whether the people saw the Spirit-Dove. They heard the strange thunder-voice; but Jesus alone understood the meaning, for it was an answer to His prayer. And mingling with the people again, He went quietly away. In the dusk of evening the crowds dispersed to their homes, talking of all they had seen and heard, and some wondered who this great Person could be of whom John spoke. Whether the Christ would come soon, and if He would be a king, not knowing that He had been in the midst of them that day. Others talked of the loud noise they had heard in the skies, and wondered if it had anything to do with the young Man who was being baptized at that time. But John remained behind until darkness came on, and the stars were reflected in the broad river, thinking of Jesus, of the Dove, of the Heavens opening, of the Voice—thinking deeply and joyfully, and worshipping God in silence.

And whither did Jesus go, when he walked away alone? On, on, away from men, away from the people, out into the wild desert country beyond the Dead Sea. He felt the Spirit of God strong within Him, and His heart beat fast as He thought of the message which He had heard that day. Great and deep thoughts were rising in His mind, and He wished to go away by Himself, to think and to pray. And when the moon and stars came out, He was walking alone, away from the homes of men, led by the Spirit of God into the wilderness.

Remember, my child, how the Spirit of God came to Jesus, and know that His Spirit will also come to thee if thou dost ask Him: not as a Dove, not with a sound, but felt, though unseen. And in moments of silent waiting upon Him thou wilt hear a voice within thee saying, “Thou art My child,” and the voice is the voice of God.

TEMPTED IN THE WILDERNESS.

DEAD SEA, WINTER, A.D. 31.

Jesus went into the wilderness beyond the Dead Sea ; a wild region of rocky hills and sand. Night came on, and when He sat down to rest, all was silent, save the wind blowing through the dry grass, and the scream of a distant wild beast.

When the dawn came, he rose and went deeper into the wilderness, where the wolf, the wild boar, the tiger, and the lion walked about in daylight. Day after day passed, and He was with them alone. The lion would lift his shaggy head and glare at Him as He passed. Gentleness can tame a lion. During these lonely days and nights He was thinking, thinking, and praying to God to make plain the work which He had to do, until deep in His heart he settled the few great principles which were to guide Him, which He was to teach, and from which He never swerved in all His trials. For forty days He was there, and then He was ready to return, and begin His work among the people with a calm and settled mind, knowing that He was the Son of God. But He was to be tried before returning—He was to be tempted to do wickedness. The Spirit of Evil, which is called Devil, Satan, Tempter, Lucifer, Evil One, and by many other names in different countries, tempted Jesus to give up these good principles, and to take wicked ones instead ; to be guided by the Spirit of Evil rather than by the Spirit of Good, as a much more likely way to succeed in the world. For, if He did just a little wickedness, the Tempter said, He would have many people with Him, while, if he did good only, many people would be against Him. He was hungry and weak, and this thought entered His mind—

“If Thou art the Son of God, command this stone to become Bread.”

At first Jesus was inclined to do it, and then He felt that it would be wrong. His powers had been given Him, not to make food for Himself, not to work wonders for Himself, but for far higher purposes, and He found a complete answer to

the wicked suggestion in these words of the book of Deuteronomy in the Bible.

“Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that cometh from God, doth he live.”

His Father in Heaven could sustain Him, and He ought to obey Him alone ; and this suggestion was not from God.

But the temptation returned. This time it was a vision. In it the Spirit of Evil, taking the shape of a Tempter, seemed to carry Jesus to a high tower of the Golden Temple overlooking a deep valley, and to say—

“If Thou art the Son of God, cast Thyself down, for it is written in the book of Psalms,

“For He shall give His angels charge over Thee ;
To keep thee in all Thy ways.

They shall bear Thee up in their hands,
Lest Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.”

At first this promise of the Bible seemed an encouragement to perform the wonder. But no. It was a wicked suggestion. He would never try to prove by empty display that He was the Son of God, nor needlessly put Himself in danger. And, recollecting other words of the Bible in the book of Deuteronomy, spoken by Moses to the Jews long ago, which answered these, He banished the Tempter and the vision together, as He repeated them—

“You shall not tempt the Lord your God as you tempted him in Massah.” Jesus knew that He was being tempted.

But He was tempted a third time, and in a far more dangerous way. Again it is a vision. Again the Spirit of Evil, as a Tempter, seemed to carry Him to the top of a high mountain, and to show Him the most wonderful panorama that has ever been thought of. For an instant all the kingdoms of the world, their glory of mountains, rivers, plains, cities, armies, kings, princes, lovely women, riches of gold and rubies, seemed to spread out glittering before Him, and vanish again as the Tempter said—

“All these things, and the glory of them, and all this power hath been given tome, and I can give it to whom I will. I

will give it to Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me, and it shall be Thine." Jesus wished to persuade the whole world to love God and follow goodness, to become a Kingdom of God, and now He was tempted to take what seemed a quicker way to bring about this glorious end. But He would have to begin by acknowledging that wickedness was higher than goodness. In that panorama of the world, wickedness seemed the most powerful thing—as though the world were all governed and moved by it, and that, if He could but get hold of the springs of wickedness, He might turn them into goodness and have them upon His side. Was it not hopeless, with gentle persuasion only, to attempt the struggle? Why not use force, be a king, and conquer? But all temptations are founded on falsehood. Wickedness was not the greatest power in the world. To conciliate wickedness would never turn it into goodness. Universal good could never spring from one wrong act. Thus Jesus combated the suggestion, while the world's prizes—crowns, kingdoms—seemed within grasp. While earthly kings founded their kingdoms by force of war, it was not thus that He would spread the Kingdom of Heaven in the world. The impulse to wickedness subsided. Again He recollected a few words of the Bible, also from Deuteronomy.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." How could He think of serving the Spirit of Evil or obeying any but the voice of His Father in Heaven !

"Begone, Tempter !" And with these words the Spirit of Evil was silenced and tempted Him no more. Goodness had triumphed ! In these temptations Jesus felt the impulse to do evil that good might follow—the form of wickedness which overcomes many good people. Humility, simplicity, love, truth, peace, self-denial, persuasion—these Jesus chose. Pride, riches, hatred, falsehood, war, force—these He rejected. Think not that this was an easy victory, for Jesus felt the allurements of the world like an ordinary man, but He resolved to meet wickedness, not with wickedness, but to conquer it with good. There is nothing better than silent solitary waiting upon God

for making our duty clear, and so Jesus became possessed of a deep calm certainty of purpose which nothing could shake.

And when the temptations were over, we are told that angels came with their great white wings and gave Jesus food and strengthened Him.

And thou, my child, wilt remember thy Bible when thou art beset with wicked suggestions, for there thou wilt find precious words that will strengthen thee against them. And forget not that the best and purest of people are tempted to wickedness.

HE CHOOSES FIVE DISCIPLES.

JORDAN, SPRING, A.D. 31.

On His return from the wilderness, Jesus went again to John, who was now at a different part of the Jordan, called Bethabara, just outside of Judæa. He had been away about six weeks, and in sheltered parts the fresh green leaves were beginning to clothe the trees at the river side. During that time some priests sent from Jerusalem had come to John, demanding to know what he meant by his teaching, to which John had replied that he meant to warn them of the coming of the Christ. There was again a crowd of people round John, when Jesus came towards him.

“See the Lamb of God which taketh away the wickedness of the world!” John exclaimed, pointing to Jesus. And all the people looked at Jesus, as John continued, “This is He of whom I said, ‘After me there will come a man who is before me: for He was before me.’” Then speaking of the time when He baptized Jesus, he went on: “I did not know Him, but I saw the Spirit of God coming down like a Dove out of Heaven, and it rested on Him, and then I knew Him, for God said to me, ‘Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit coming down and resting, that is He.’ I have seen it, and I have said that He is the Son of God.” But the people did not believe John, for they expected that the Christ would

be a king. This was only a young countryman, with common cloak and shoes, and they thought John was speaking foolishness.

In the afternoon of the next day, about four o'clock, as John was standing with Andrew and John, two of his companions, Jesus walked past, and, looking after him, John said to them—

“See the Lamb of God!” And these two men left John and followed Jesus along the road, till turning round Jesus saw them following, and said—

“What do you seek?” They wished to know where He lived, and replied—

“Master, where dost Thou live?” Jesus looked at the men who thus called Him *Master*, and said gently—

“Come and see.” And thus invited the men went with Him, perhaps to a small hut of mats, stretched upon sticks, made by the young Carpenter Himself, and they went in and stayed with Him. Now, these were the first men who came to Jesus or ever called Him *Master*. Andrew had an elder brother called Peter, and both of them were fishermen from Bethsaida at the Lake-side in Galilee, and Andrew went and told Peter that they had found Jesus, the man of whom John spoke, and brought him to Jesus. Looking upon him kindly, Jesus called him by his name and spoke of his father, and Peter remained, and afterwards became His chief disciple.

Jesus now decided to return home to Galilee with Peter, Andrew, and John, and on their way they met a young man called Philip, also from Bethsaida, whom Andrew and Peter knew; and when Jesus saw Philip, He said to him—

“Follow Me!” And Philip also came with Him. There were now four disciples, and when they came into Galilee, Philip thought of Nathanael, a friend of his, and went and found him sitting reading under the shade of a green fig tree—

“We have found Jesus of Nazareth,” Philip told him joyfully, “the Son of Joseph. He of whom Moses and the good men in the Bible wrote.” Nathanael knew the Bible said that the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem,

and he had heard bad things of Nazareth, and answered doubtfully—

“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Philip would not argue with him. He thought that if he could only get him to see Jesus his doubts would vanish.

“Come and see,” was all he said, and Nathanael rose and came, and when Jesus saw him, He exclaimed—

“See, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!” Nathanael was surprised, and replied at once—

“How knowest Thou me?” Looking at him with calm dark eyes, Jesus answered—

“Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.”

“Master! Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel!” Nathanael exclaimed, meaning that Jesus was the Christ, for His answer filled him with wonder and reverence.

“Because I said I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest?” Jesus replied, chiding him gently. “Thou shalt see greater things than these. Heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon Me.” Then Nathanael also became one of His disciples, his name being afterwards changed to Bartholomew. Jesus had now five disciples.

It was Springtime, and as they went through the hill country, where the fig and olive trees were putting on their leaves, and the sweet wild flowers were weaving their brilliant colours through the grass, the men listened to Jesus talking, and thought they had never heard any one speak like Him, and when they reached the Lake of Gennesaret, some of them went to their own homes at Bethsaida, and some went with Him to Nazareth. Home again! but not to stay. He had not come to take up His Carpenter’s tools. He had laid them down for ever. And His mother saw that while He had been away a change had come over Him, for He seemed even graver and more earnest than before.

Remember then how Andrew and Philip brought their

friends to Jesus. Philip begging Nathanael just to come and look at Him. And thou wilt tell thy companions about Him too, for children can get children to do what older people cannot persuade them to.

THE MARRIAGE AT CANA.

CANA, SPRING, A.D. 31.

There was to be a marriage in Cana, a little village about four miles from Nazareth, on the road down to the Lake. His mother and brothers and sisters were going, and Jesus and the disciples who were with Him, were invited, for it was the marriage of a friend.

On the wedding morning they walked over the hills, and saw the pretty bride, with wild flowers twined in her loose hair—white orange blossom, crimson pomegranate, and delicate wild rose—and all covered with a white veil, married to her lover, among rejoicing friends. Then followed the wedding supper in the home of the bridegroom's father, which was gay with festoons of flowers on the walls,—honeysuckle and ivy—rugs on the floor, and coloured cushions, and couches for the guests at the table. They were in the land of grapes, and there was wine, and whether it was that more people had come than were expected, or that the bridegroom's father was poor, in the course of the supper the wine was finished, but only the women who were serving knew of this, of whom Jesus' mother was one. Now, it would have been thought a great disgrace if they had required to tell the guests that there was no more wine; and, seeing the distress of her friends, Mary thought of her Son, who had ever been her adviser at home. Beckoning Jesus to come and speak with her, she whispered—

“They have no wine.” And He, knowing that she wished Him to assist them, said gently to her—

“Woman, what have I to do with thee? My time has not yet come.” And He returned to the table and sat down. He

was not angry ; and, thinking it a favourable answer, His mother went to the servants and said—

“ Whatever He telleth you to do, do it.” Now there were six stone jars for holding water at the house door, and they were empty, because every guest had washed his feet and left his shoes at the door, for no one might go into a house in that country except with bare feet. Rising again from the table and coming to the door, Jesus said to the servants who were outside in the sunshine—

“ Fill the stone jars with water.” And taking up dishes and pitchers they filled them with water from the village well, as quickly as they could, and when they were all full, He said again—

“ Draw out now and carry it to the head one at the table.” Now this man sat at the end of the room, and all new things were taken first to him to be tasted. A servant filled a wine-flagon from the water-jar, and did as he was told, and when he reached the head of the table and poured it into a wine cup, it was red wine. When the master of the feast tasted the wine, it was so good that he called playfully to the bridegroom’s father—

“ Every man who giveth a feast setteth the good wine first on the table ; and when men have drunk freely, then he bringeth in the worse wine : but thou hast kept the good wine to the end.” And thus he drew attention to the wine, though no one knew whence it came.

This, then, was the first wonder, called a miracle, which Jesus did. And as the supper went on it was whispered from the servants to the guests, where the wine had come from, until all knew, and were astonished at His power. After supper came music, games, and dancing on the earthen floor, or perhaps in the open court-yard of the house, with Jesus looking on amid a throng of glad faces ; and under the stars of night, with the shadows of the dark hills around Him, He walked back to His quiet home at Nazareth.

And thou wilt remember that Jesus loves times of happy rejoicing. And what is more charming and joyful than a

child dancing—dancing with radiant face, arms and body swaying to his own time and tune?

CLEARING THE GOLDEN TEMPLE.

JERUSALEM, APRIL, A.D. 31.

After the marriage, Jesus went down to Capernaum at the Lake-side with His disciples, His mother and brothers also going with Him, walking easily there in one day. It is one of the most beautiful places in the whole country, especially in early Spring, for the Lake of Gennesaret, which is about the size of Lake Windermere in England, is deep and surrounded by high hills, that come close down to the blue water on one side, while on the other side was a rich fruit and flower-bearing plain called the "garden of Gennesaret," watered by several small streams that flow across it from a large, beautiful spring. The air on this plain is so soft and warm that grapes and figs ripened there almost the whole year round, and melons, dates, oranges, citrons, wheat, barley, and rice grew more abundantly there than anywhere else, with scarlet geraniums, purple hyacinths, golden crocuses, and countless other flowers spreading down to the white beach, formed of innumerable small shells. On the other side of the Lake rose barren hills of yellow, grey, and black rock, with groves of palms, almond, fig, and olive trees in the deep gorges. The Lake was then crowded with fishing-boats, and although it is only thirteen miles long and six broad, there were ten towns round it, besides villages. Capernaum was near one end, and through it passed the great caravan-road from the East to Jerusalem. It had fine public buildings, broad streets, and markets, and squares, in which might be seen Africans, Arabs, and Jews buying and selling.

Jesus went to live in His disciple Peter's house, near the shore of black rocks at Capernaum. But He remained only a few days, for it was time to start for the Passover Festival at Jerusalem, and it is likely that He only went there to join the

band of people who were going from Capernaum. With singing and rejoicing the company left the town, taking the road along the Lake-side, with green corn-fields and fruit trees on one hand, and the blue sparkling water on the other; leaving the Lake, they wound up through deep green vales sprinkled with flowers, and over thymy plains, till they could look down upon the tree-fringed gorge of the Jordan, which remained in sight day after day, till, with waving branches and a burst of joyful psalm songs, they looked down once more upon the great Golden Temple from the Mount of Olives.

The Temple was the centre of the Festival. From their camp of tents and huts made of mats and branches on Olivet, they could see the people moving in dark crowds in the streets about it, and going up and down its great white steps, while sheep and oxen were being driven in herds towards it.

Going thither on the first morning, Jesus saw a sight in the great outer Temple court that made Him angry. It was a beautiful place, open to the blue sky and surrounded with pillars and porches of red and white marble, with a floor made of many coloured marbles; yet the sellers of sheep, oxen, and doves, and the money-changers, had brought their things into it, and were shouting and wrangling, buying and selling there, so that the noise reached even the worshippers in the courts within. Bleating lambs were penned in one corner here, while there, was a man struggling to hold an ox, and there, were dove-sellers with their wicker baskets, and there, behind tables with little piles of gold and silver upon them, sat the money-changers, the greatest rogues in Jerusalem, who changed foreign coins into small skekels, the only money which the priests would take. They had not come to worship, but to buy and sell; and Jesus was angry that the priests should allow it, and taking a number of small cords He tied them together into a scourge, and drove the keepers of the sheep and oxen, with their herds, out of the beautiful Court. Astonishment filled all who saw Him driving them out through the gates, but no one tried to resist Him or said that He did wrong. Then, going over to the money-changers, He

poured out their money bags and upset their tables, sending their coins ringing and scattering down on the pavement, and ordered them also out; while to the men who sold the caged doves and all the other traders, He said—

“Take these things hence, and do not make My Father’s house a house of buying and selling.” The noise of the lowing cattle as they were driven away was as nothing to the shouts and screams of rage and terror with which the money-changers saw their precious money scattered upon the pavement, and they tried to clutch and scrape together as much as they could gather before flying out.

At length all the traders were gone—only the worshippers remained; but still they could be heard outside bewailing their losses, and demanding what right this young Man of Galilee had to turn them out, yet none ventured back again. Cattle were mixed, money was lost, doves escaped, all was confusion amongst the rogues; yet not one of them could tell why he had fled. It was not His scourge nor His few words, but it was the appearance of Jesus which drove them out. Then the Temple priests began to ask each other, What right had Jesus thus to interfere in their Temple? And coming to Him they said—

“Seeing Thou hast done this thing, what sign canst Thou show us of Thy right to do it?”

“Destroy this temple,” He answered, “and in three days I will raise it up.”

“This Temple was forty-six years in building,” they exclaimed, “and wilt Thou raise it up in three days?” The Temple was not even finished yet; but Jesus did not answer or explain that He was speaking of Himself; but what He said that day the priests and traders never forgot, for they blamed Him for it three years afterwards.

Remember, then, that Jesus does not like people when in church to think of business or money or even of play and games; but to think about God and Heaven, and so truly to worship there.

NICODEMUS.

JERUSALEM, APRIL, A.D. 31.

Every morning early, when the priests blew their silver trumpets, a cloud from the morning sacrifice rose into the blue air above the Golden Temple, and the great courts echoed with the singing of psalms. Jesus now began to walk each day among the pillars in the porches round the Temple courts where the Teachers met, doing wonders and speaking to the people, and many people believed Him ; but He did not trust them, and asked none of them to be His disciples. But they called Him a young Rabbi, which means "Teacher ;" and old men said they had never heard such speaking at a Passover Festival.

Now there were men in Jerusalem called Pharisees, which means "ones separated," proud Teachers, who thought themselves better than all other men, and Nicodemus was one of the highest of them. He had heard Jesus speaking in the Temple, and thought He was the Christ whom they all expected ; but the Pharisees despised any one who said so, and though Nicodemus wished much to talk with Jesus, he was afraid of what the other Pharisees would say. One night, however, he left his fine house, and went out alone over the dark Kedron Bridge to the camp of the Galileans on the Mount of Olives where Jesus lived, and there he found Jesus, and taking Him aside from among the tents and the people, he unmuffled his cloak in the full moonlight and showed who he was.

"Master," he began, as they stood in the shadow of the olive trees that grew thick on the side of the hill, and whose thin leaves shone like silver in the moonlight, "we know that Thou art a Teacher from God, for no man could do the things which Thou doest unless God be with him." Thus he told Jesus what the Pharisees thought of Him, and they talked long and earnestly together, the rich Councillor and the young Carpenter.

"Unless a man be born again from above, he cannot see God," said Jesus.

"But how can a man be born again when he is old?" replied Nicodemus, in surprise; and Jesus explained that being born from above, meant, to have the Spirit of God coming into us to guide us; saying, as the warm night wind rustled through the leaves overhead—

"Be not surprised that I say, 'Thou must be born from Heaven.' *The wind bloweth where it will, and we hear the sound of it, but know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth. So is it with the Spirit of God*"—meaning that the Spirit of God cometh unseen, and yet we know when He is present.

"How is this possible?" said Nicodemus, in astonishment, for he believed that men only entered Heaven by being Jews and keeping the whole Law, as taught by the priests."

"Art thou a Teacher in Jerusalem," said Jesus, quietly, "and understandest not these things?" Gently rebuking him for teaching religion to others, and yet not knowing the principal thing, adding, "I speak of what I know and have seen, yet thou dost not believe Me. If thou dost not believe when I speak about the earth, how wilt thou believe Me if I speak of Heaven? No man hath gone up to Heaven, but I came down from Heaven, and am in Heaven. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent of brass in the wilderness, so must I be lifted up, that whoever believeth on Me may have Heaven. For God so loved the world, that He gave Me, His only Son, that whoever believeth on Me should have Heaven. God sent Me, that through Me the world should be saved." Thus He told Nicodemus plainly that He was the long-expected Christ, the Son of God. And comparing Himself to a light in darkness, He continued—

"I am the Light come into the world, but men do not believe in Me, loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are bad. Every one that doeth bad things hateth the light, and cometh not to it, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth good, cometh, that his deeds may be seen, that they are done as God wisheth." A gentle reproof this

to the great Councillor who had come in the dark that night.

As they walked together among the fresh grass and wild flowers of Olivet under the whispering trees, Jesus telling him of Heaven, and of the Spirit of God which cometh unseen, the eyes of Nicodemus turned from the beautiful face of his Companion, and travelled the dark blue spaces of the night, as he wondered whether behind the furthest star, which shone as a faint white spark, the bright fields of Heaven were outspread of which He spoke, and he wondered also how Jesus, while on earth, could yet be in Heaven. And as he listened to His words he felt the Spirit of God rising in new power within him, and resolved to follow Jesus. They parted as the rosy dawn broke over the great city, the one going to his fine house and silken couch, the other to His simple hut and bed of leaves ; but Nicodemus never forgot that night with Jesus, as thou wilt afterwards see.

Now, in talking with Nicodemus, Jesus spoke of Heaven in two ways which I shall explain, for it will help thee to understand Him better later on. He spoke of Heaven in this life, and of Heaven in the life of our spirits after death. God makes Heaven. To have the Spirit of God in us—to know and obey God—is to have Heaven here, and the perfect union of our Spirits with God in His beautiful Home, is Heaven hereafter. Spreading the knowledge of God is what Jesus called spreading the Kingdom of Heaven among men. But the people had been taught to expect that His Kingdom would be one of cities, armies, and power, and that He would reign over it from a magnificent Jerusalem ; but Jesus taught them that His Kingdom of Heaven was unseen, of goodness, joy, and peace, in the hearts of men, women, and little children everywhere. Heaven has many beautiful names in the Bible, and when thou readest of the Kingdom of God, Kingdom of our Father, Kingdom of Heaven, Life, Life everlasting, Life eternal, Paradise, I wish thee to remember that they all mean Heaven, Heaven in us here, or Heaven with God after death, and sometimes both together.

Remember, then, that what Jesus called being born again, is to have the Spirit of God rising within thee; and that to obey that voice is to believe in Jesus, and have Heaven.

JOHN AND JESUS.

JORDAN, SUMMER, A.D. 31.

Jesus remained some time teaching in Jerusalem, after the Festival week was over, and then He went into Judæa, which is the hill country round about Jerusalem, on his first journey as a Teacher. The Jordan being shallow with the heat, John the Baptist had gone further up the river to Ænon, where there was still plenty of water in the pools, and crowds came to him every day; and after a time Jesus also came down from the hills to the river, not to John, but to a shallow place nearer to Jerusalem, where He also taught, and greater crowds came to Jesus than to John, and His disciples baptized the people. When John's disciples heard of this, although Andrew and John were their old companions, they were displeased, and complained to John the Baptist.

"Master," said they, "Jesus who was with thee across the Jordan, and of whom thou spoke, is baptizing, and everybody goeth to Him." They had just had a dispute with some Teachers sent from Jerusalem about purifying by water, and they hoped John would say that the disciples of Jesus baptized wrongly, and that his was the only true baptism. But John was a noble man. When his cousin Jesus was still an unknown Carpenter in Nazareth, John was a great and famous Teacher, followed by crowds; but now, though he taught as well as ever, the people were leaving him and going to Jesus, and of John's disciples two had already gone, and the others were grumbling. But he was not jealous; and answered them firmly—

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from God. You yourselves have told others that I said,

‘I am not the Christ, but I am sent before Him.’ The friend of the Bridegroom, who standeth by and heareth Him speak, rejoiceth greatly because of His voice. My joy therefore is full.” Far from being jealous, John wished that the people should go to Jesus, and he added these noble words: “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*” He meant that he had done his part, in telling the people of the coming of Jesus, and that henceforth they must look to Jesus as their Leader, and then he praised Him, saying—

“Jesus who cometh from God is above all, and He speaketh of what He hath seen and heard, yet no one believeth His message, but whoever shall believe, maketh sure of this, that God is true. Jesus whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God loveth Him, His Son, and hath given everything into His hand. *He that believeth in Jesus hath Heaven: but he that believeth not, shall not see Heaven.*” How soon were the forebodings of John realised! In a few months King Antipas, the son of the wicked King Herod, took him with soldiers and imprisoned him in a castle near the Dead Sea so called because of its horrid saltiness, and from which castle John never escaped.

The priests at Jerusalem disliked John, but Jesus they now hated, after what He had done in the Temple; and hearing that even greater crowds were going to Jesus than to John, and remembering all He had said, they agreed to try and stop Jesus from teaching, and if possible to have Him taken a prisoner. But friends told Jesus that John had been put into prison, and of the plans of the priests; and Jesus resolved to return to the Lake-side, but not before He had taught for six months in Judæa, and had made a great stir and won many friends, particularly among the poor people, with His strange new teaching about Heaven. I do not think that Jesus saw John at this time, and He never saw him afterwards; and thus, from the very start of His teaching, the priests and Teachers of Jerusalem turned against Jesus.

Remember, then, John’s noble answer, and be not jealous

of others who are able to do more good in the world than thou ; but keep doing thy best, and rejoice that they can do better.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.

SYCHAR, WINTER, A.D. 31.

Jesus did not return to Galilee by the usual road along the banks of Jordan, but went up to the hills and through the country of Samaria, a way which few cared to go, as the people of Judæa hated the Samaritans, and the Samaritans hated the Judæans, but they were more friendly to Galileans. From the Jordan, Jesus and the disciples who were with Him climbed the hills, and joined the high-road. Samaria was a fine country, with grassy plains and wooded glens, while the hills were not steep and bare like Judæa, but rounded and covered with trees, walnut, almond, pear, plum, and fir ; and the numerous brooks in the hollows ran sparkling like silver, but some of the deep and wooded gorges were now difficult to cross owing to the Winter rains.

By midday they reached the little town of Sychar, in the midst of the high hills of Samaria, and it was warm, for even in December the sun is hot there at noon, and a little way down the vale from the town there was a deep well, built round with stones, and with water sparkling far down in it, and Jesus sending His disciples up to the town to buy some bread, rested in the cool shade of the small stone shed that stood beside the well. While He waited there, a woman with her red water-jar on her shoulder, and a cord in her hand, came down the path from the town for water. Fastening her cord to the jar, she let it down into the well, and drew it up filled with clear, cool water. Taking off the cord, she put the jar on her hand, and was about to lift it to her shoulder and go away, when Jesus, coming from His seat, said to her—

“Give me to drink.” A common enough thing to ask ; but she was surprised that a Jew should speak to her, and replied in a distant way—

"How is it that Thou, a Jew, askest water from me, a woman of Samaria?" She also knew that women were so much looked down upon by Jews, that a young Teacher was forbidden to speak to them outside of a house. But Jesus cared not for such foolish things.

"If thou knewest who it is that saith to thee, 'Give me to drink,'" He answered, "thou wouldst ask Me, and I would give thee living water"—meaning the Spirit of God. Seeing that Jesus was no common Man, she began to speak more respectfully, although she did not understand Him.

"Sir," she said, "Thou hast nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep: whence hast Thou this living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well, and drank of it, with his sons and his cattle?" She thought He was speaking against their well, and so she told Him its age, and the great people who had used it. Jesus then told her that what He could give her was greater than water out of any well, saying, as He pointed to her water-jar—

"Whoever drinketh of this water will thirst again; but whoever receiveth the water that I can give, will never thirst, but it will be in him a spring of water springing up into Heaven." Still thinking that Jesus spoke of some wonderful kind of water for drinking, she exclaimed—

"Sir, give me that water that I may never thirst again, nor come all the way hither for water!" Meditating for a little, Jesus tried her in a different way.

"Go and call thy husband," He said, "and come back again."

"I have no husband," she replied, turning away her eyes as she spoke. He saw the change, and said gently—

"Thou hast well said, for thou hast had five husbands, and he with whom thou now livest is not thy husband: thou hast spoken the truth." In one sentence He reproved and encouraged her, and, no longer proud, she stood with eyes cast down, for her whole life seemed known to Him, and replied humbly—

"I see that Thou art a Prophet." Now the Jews said that

God should be worshipped in their Temple on Mount Moriah, in Jerusalem, and the Samaritans said, in their Temple, on Mount Gerizim, whose high wooded top they could see not far off; and she went on to say, "Our fathers worshipped God on yonder mountain, but the Jews say that on Mount Moriah, in Jerusalem, is the right place to worship?" Jesus brought her back to the Spirit of God, the spring of all good, in His answer, the greatest in the Bible—

"Woman, believe me," He said, "the time cometh, when neither on yonder mountain, nor in Jerusalem, will men worship God. The Samaritans do not know what they worship, but the Jews know what they worship. But, I say, the time cometh, yes, and hath come, when the true worshippers shall worship God everywhere, in spirit and in truth, for God seeketh such to worship Him." Thus He explained that God's true worshippers do not need to worship in temples or in churches, for they can worship Him in spirit wherever they may be, and He added these glorious words, "*God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.*"

To what a height had this conversation risen! which has come down to us through the ages, as the greatest recorded conversation of all time. There, by a lonely well, over a jar of water, Jesus explained to a woman the true relationship between God and man, and how they touch and flow into each other. But a higher point was reached. The conversation had got beyond the woman's understanding, and she could only answer in a vague way.

"I know that the Christ will come, and when He cometh, He will explain everything to us," and she looked up at Him, and returning her gaze with His clear dark eyes, Jesus said gently—

"*I who speak to thee am He.*" With wonder and amazement the woman heard these joyful words from His lips, and gazed at His face in silent worship.

By this time the disciples had returned, and were surprised to find Him speaking to a woman, but none of them cared to come forward. Leaving her water-jar on the edge of the

well, the woman ran back again to the town to tell the people there the joyful tidings that the Christ had come, exclaiming, in her excitement, more than was quite correct—

“Come and see a man who told me all that ever I did ! Can this be the Christ ? ”

While she was away the disciples approached Jesus and asked Him to take some of their bread, but He would not, saying, as He sat thinking—

“I have food to eat that you know not of.” And they wondered if some one had brought Him food ; but He added, “My food is to do the will of God who sent Me, and to carry out His work.” He was thinking of the great task which He had begun, and which seemed to Him like reaping a great harvest, and as He looked towards the fields, that were being ploughed and sown with wheat, He said, “You say that there are four months yet before the harvest time, but My harvest is ripe already.” Then as He thought of John in prison, He added, “With us, one man soweth, and another reapeth. I send you to reap what you have not sown : others have sown, and you shall get the good of their sowing.”

But the woman returned, bringing with her men who asked Jesus into their town, and He went with them, and they received Him kindly, and while some of the people believed He was the Christ because of what the woman had said, far more believed when they saw and heard Him for themselves ; and He stayed at Sychar teaching for two days. And thus driven away by the Jews from Judæa He was welcomed by the Samaritans.

And thou wilt remember that thou dost not require to go to church or chapel to worship God, but that the worship which He loveth best is the worship and obedience of thy spirit wherever thou art.

“Come, gentle Spirit, be my guide,
A Voice above the great world's din,
That checks each thought when turned aside
From flowers of light, to thorns of sin,
And gives Heaven's peace within.”

THE NOBLEMAN'S BOY.

CANA, WINTER, A.D. 31.

Leaving the kind people of Sychar, Jesus walked on towards the hills of Gilboa, whence they could see Mount Hermon (which means the white hill) towering against the blue sky, clad in its mantle of Winter snow down to the Lebanon hills. Descending through the deep vale of Jenin with its green orchards, to the level plain of Jezreel, in a few hours they were in Galilee again, where the people in the villages were glad to see Him, for those who had been at the Festival at Jerusalem had spread the news of His clearing the Temple and of His wonderful teaching. And as He went through Galilee He taught in the village churches. Climbing again into the hills He passed Nazareth, where He knew they would not receive Him well, and went on to Cana where His disciple Nathanael lived.

He was now thirty-one years of age, and had been teaching the people for a year. And while He was at Cana a nobleman, who had heard of His return, came to see Him, an officer of King Antipas, who lived in a splendid house at Capernaum, with servants and soldiers under him. A much-loved son had taken fever, and the doctors could not make him better, and hearing of Jesus, he ordered his horse, and rode up the wild Vale of Doves, with its overhanging cliffs and deep caves, that led up through the hills from the Lake-side, to bring Jesus down to his son. Riding into the village of Cana, with his sword rattling and servant following him, he asked for the house in which Jesus lived, and having found Him he sprang from his horse. Could this be Jesus!—a tall young man, dressed in a plain countryman's clothes? But a glance at His face convinced him, and in a few earnest words he begged Him to come to Capernaum at once, and heal his dear son. Jesus looked at his anxious face, mud be-spattered clothes, and foaming horse, but He wished to test him first—

“Unless thou seest Me do some wonderful thing,” He said, “thou wilt not believe that I can heal thy son?” The

nobleman did not protest or argue ; every moment's delay was anguish to him, and he exclaimed—

“Sir, come down, before my child is dead.” He did not doubt His power, and looking at him, Jesus said in a reassuring voice—

“Go home. Thy son liveth.” The nobleman had come to take Jesus back with him, but this was enough, and with a few earnest words of gratitude, he went to the inn to rest his horse before riding back. His mind was now at ease, and as it was a rough dangerous road of twenty miles, he did not start until next morning. As he rode home on the following day, he saw some of his servants coming in the distance, and from their signs he knew that they brought good news, and their first words were—

“Thy son liveth.”

“At what o'clock did he begin to improve?” he asked joyfully.

“Yesterday, at one o'clock, the fever left him,” they replied. And he told them that that was the time when he found Jesus. And they all rode gladly home together to Capernaum, reaching there in the afternoon. Thou canst imagine with what joy he would kiss his boy, and tell him how he found Jesus, what He was like, and what He had said. And the boy, and his father and mother, and all in the house, believed in Jesus.

And thou wilt remember that this is the first of a great many kind acts of healing people which we are told that Jesus did, and thou wilt learn from this story how great is a father's love for his little child.

FISHING ON THE LAKE.

CAPERNAUM, WINTER, A.D. 31.

Owing to John the Baptist having been put into prison, and the means taken by the priests in Jerusalem, who had friends in every village, to stop the teaching of Jesus, He went from Cana to Nazareth, and stayed quietly at His mother's house,

His five disciples going to their own homes. After living at Nazareth for some months, He came down again to Capernaum, and began teaching openly among the villages at the Lake-side, and crowds came to hear Him.

One morning early in Spring He was on the shore of white shells, at the plain of Gennesaret, teaching at a lovely spot, where a person can be heard speaking a long way off. Thou canst see Him as He stands on a high part. Before Him are the crowd of people sitting on the sloping grass and dark rocks that rise here and there through it; behind Him are the waves rippling on the beach, while the water of the Lake spreads blue and glittering in the sunshine, away to the other side where the bare yellow hills are quivering in a haze of heat. As He speaks, two fishing boats come in to the shore, the brown nets are taken out, and the fishermen begin to wash them a little way off. The crowd are now pressing so close to hear Him speak, that they are pushing Him into the water, and, going into Peter's boat, He asks him to push it a little way out, and thus anchored, He sits down in the stern, and from this rough pulpit again speaks to the people, who are pressing down to the very water's edge.

When Jesus finished speaking, He sent the people away and left the boat; and the nets having been put back again, washed and mended for the next day's fishing, He said to Peter, whose brother Andrew was helping him—

“Put out the boat into deep water, and let down the nets to fish.” Now, the men were tired, and wished to go home, and knowing it was little use to fish in the morning, Peter replied—

“Master, we have toiled at fishing all night, and caught nothing, yet because Thou sayest it, we will let down the nets,” and he told the men to row out, while Jesus watched them from the shore. Rowing in a wide ring they let out the nets again, which hung down into the water, and Peter soon saw they had enclosed so many fishes that it seemed as if the nets would break, and he signalled to James and John, who were partners in the fishing, to come out at once with the

second boat. The nets were slowly taken in and the silvery fish shaken out into the boats, loading them so full that they seemed about to sink as they rowed back to the shore. On reaching shallow water, Peter jumped out, and running to Jesus, knelt down on the beach as he exclaimed—

“Depart from me, for I am a wicked man, O Lord!” He was sorry he had spoken against going to fish when Jesus told them to row out, and thought he was not worthy to have such a Master.

“Fear not, Peter,” Jesus said, kindly. “After this, thou shalt catch men,”—meaning, that he would soon give up fishing and be a Teacher.

Another morning later on, as Jesus passed the same place, He saw Peter and Andrew fishing again near the shore, and called to them—

“Come with Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” And drawing their boats up on the beach, they left them with the other fishermen, and went away with Jesus. A little further on they saw the brothers James and John, with their father, Zebedee, sitting in a boat mending their nets with string, and Jesus called to them, also, to come; and they, too, bringing in the boat, left the fishing to their father and his hired sailors, and went away with Him. Thus He gathered His disciples again, young, hardy men, to begin the great struggle with the priests and false Teachers, which would end only with His death.

And thou wilt remember the answer of Peter, “Because Thou sayest it, we will do it,” and whatever may be thy doubts, learn ever to obey the voice of God within thee, that telleth thee what is right to do.

HE HEALS THEM ALL.

CAPERNAUM, SPRING, A.D. 32.

The Church of Capernaum at the Lake was a very fine building of white marble, built on a high part of the town, the gift of a rich officer, and one Sabbath morning it was

crowded, for Jesus was going to speak there. Sitting among the old Teachers, on a bench at the head of the Church, He faced the people, who stood between a double row of stone pillars. Behind Him were the box of books, the curtain, the seven-branched candlestick, the ever-burning lamp, with the reader's desk a little way off. After prayers, singing, and reading, Jesus went forward and sat down on the Teacher's raised seat in the middle of the Church, and all the people stood up, and then He spoke to them, and they were astonished, for He did not repeat old sayings like the other Teachers, but spoke like One having authority from God. Suddenly a loud cry interrupted Him, saying—

“Ah! what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee, whom Thou art, Thou Holy One of God.” The cry came from a wild-looking man, a well-known maniac, who had come in with the crowd, and who was terrified at the words of Jesus; and the people shrank back from the man, but Jesus, looking calmly at him, said in a clear voice—

“Be quiet, and come out of him.” Uttering loud cries the man fell down upon the white stone floor, but rose again; and the people coming near and talking to him found that he was healed of his dreadful trouble. They were amazed at what had happened, and the congregation soon broke up, and as they went home, some to distant parts of Galilee, they carried the news away, saying to each other—

“What is this? A new Teacher, who speaketh in His own authority; whom even the evil spirits in a maniac obey and depart!”

Walking through the sunny streets, Jesus went away with His disciples to have a midday meal and rest at Peter's house by the Lake, the house which was henceforth to be His home. There He found Peter's wife's mother ill with fever, and they asked Him to heal her. Going into her room, He stood beside her bed, and taking her hot hand, bade the fever leave her, and raised her up; and she rose from her bed well again, and helped to prepare the food for them. But the Pharisees

of Capernaum told the priests of Jerusalem that Jesus had broken their sabbath rules twice on that day, by healing two people, and they watched Him closely, for they said it was wrong to heal any one on the Sabbath. With the people, the Sabbath ended at sundown; and then they might work and walk again; and when the sun was setting that evening, throwing the shadows of the Western hills on the mirror of the still Lake, while the yellow cliffs of Gadara were ruddy with sunlight, and clouds of red and gold still glowed in the violet sky above the green ranges of Galilee, the people brought their sick and laid them in the cool shade at the door of Peter's cottage. And there Jesus stood, with His clear, dark eyes and gentle voice, speaking to them and touching them as they came, blind, lame, deaf, palsied, and sending them away whole; and as He healed the maniacs, they cried out—

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of God!” But He stopped them. And fathers took away their sons healed, and mothers their babes, and in many a poor home there was joy that night, for He healed them all.

And if thou wouldst remember this sunset scene, for there is no finer description of it written, learn to sing the beautiful hymn which begins with these words—

“At even, ere the sun was set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
Oh, in what divers pains they met!
Oh, with what joy they went away!”

WALKING THROUGH GALILEE.

GALILEE, SPRING, A.D. 32.

Early in the morning, before it was light, Jesus rose and climbed the green hills behind Capernaum, which were now covered with wild flowers, brighter than any garden, that He might be alone, a thing which He afterwards frequently did; and He saw the golden dawn breaking over the Gadarean

hills, and pouring light upon the Lake and the sleeping towns round it. When Peter found that Jesus was away, he went with Andrew to find Him, for people had already begun to gather round his cottage door. Knowing His fondness for hills, they sought Jesus there, and finding Him asked Him to return with them, but He answered—

“Let us go into the other towns of Galilee, because I came for that purpose.” Then they started on His first journey through all the villages of Galilee, a journey which took some weeks, for He went from village to village, of which there were about two hundred, teaching in their churches and healing. And people from Syria, Judæa, and Jerusalem, and across the Jordan, came into Galilee to hear Him. So many months had passed since He was at Jerusalem that the priests took little notice of Him at this time. It was the season for green grass, tender leaves, and sweet flowers, the best time of the year for walking, and He went over the whole of Galilee, which was about the size of a large English county, now speaking in their little white pillared churches, and now to a larger crowd under the evergreen oak trees by the wayside.

Near every town there were men called lepers, who suffered from a dreadful illness, and were not allowed to come near people, or into their villages, but had to rattle a clapper and cry “Unclean ! unclean !” wherever they went. And one of these poor creatures, hearing that Jesus was in a certain town, came into it, sounding his clapper and uttering his cry ; and the people shrank back from him, and when he came to Jesus, he knelt down and said—

“Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean !” With only one hope left, he had ventured into the town, and Jesus was sorry for him, and although it was against the law for any one to touch a leper, He put His hand upon him, and said—

“I will, be thou healed.” And the poor man, who was scarcely able to walk, rose to his feet healed, and began to thank Jesus, but He stopped him gently, saying—

“Tell no one, but go and show thyself to the priest in the

Temple at Jerusalem, and give the present which the law says thou art to give for thy cleansing, and as a proof of thy healing." Jesus wished the priests to know what had been done; for they would go through a ceremony with the leper beside running water, with sparrows and cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop, that would take fourteen days, sprinkling the man seven times with water, before they would give him a letter saying that he was healed, without which priests' letter he dared not go among other men.

The man went away, but he could not contain his joy, and told every one he met what Jesus had done for him, and the people came to hear Jesus in such numbers because of this, that He could not go into the towns for the crowds, but remained in the open country teaching in grassy places, and they came out of the towns to listen to Him. But He was tired, and could get no rest for the crowds that came every day, and the priests at Jerusalem, hearing of Him, were again roused against Him, and He went away, without telling any one whither He was going, into a lonely wild place, to rest, to think, and to pray.

Remember if thou ever feelest bad, and wicked, and miserable, what the poor leper did, and bring thy sorrow in spirit to Jesus, and ask Him to help thee, and thou wilt be strengthened and made better.

LET THROUGH THE ROOF.

CAPERNAUM, SPRING, A.D. 32.

The fragrant oleanders were now in full flower, in masses of rose and crimson blossom as high as a house, by the sides of the Lake and the small water courses that run into it, and the heavy rich smell of the white orange flower was wafted across the plain of Gennesaret.

Returning from his place of retirement, Jesus quietly entered Capernaum, perhaps at night, for it was not known for some days that He was back, and He was teaching one day in the

open court of a large house, and the people came crowding in to hear Him. The house was built in the shape of a square, with a court open to the sky in the middle, into which the windows looked, so that it held a great many people. Jesus sat in the shaded gallery that ran round the court; and among the listeners were Pharisees and Teachers of the Law, who had been sent from Jerusalem to watch all that He said and did, and to tell their masters. But He spoke openly and freely to the people, who were glad to listen.

While He was speaking, a young man who had palsy was brought to the house, lying upon a mat; but his friends could not get near even the door, and tying cords to each corner of his mat, and going up the outside stairs of the house, they drew him gently up to the flat roof. Then they carefully removed some of the red tiles, making a hole wide enough, and lowered their friend down to the floor at the feet of Jesus. The Pharisees were indignant at this interruption; but Jesus was not. He was touched with the faithfulness of the man and his friends, whose faces were peering down through the hole in the roof to see what would happen, and, looking kindly on the young man, Jesus said these strange words—

“Son, all thy wickedness is forgiven thee.” At first the people did not understand what Jesus meant, for priests only used these words in the name of God, but He was no priest,—only a young Carpenter. “Forgive wickedness!” And the Pharisees began to speak to each other indignantly—

“Why doth this Man speak thus?” said one. “Who is this that speaketh blasphemies?” said another. “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” exclaimed a third. They thought Jesus was only pretending to forgive wickedness. Looking at these sham-good men with searching eyes, Jesus said to them—

“Why do you think so in your hearts?” but they did not answer, and He went on, “Whether is it easier to say, ‘Thy sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’?” but still they did not answer; and He proceeded, “That you may know that I have power to forgive sins”—turning to the sick man, He said,

“I say to thee, ‘Rise, take up thy mat, and go home!’” And to the amazement of them all, the young man rose, and taking up his mat, walked out, thanking God for his recovery; and some of the people followed him, filled with awe, praising God for giving Jesus such power, and saying to the people outside—

“We have seen strange things to-day, and have never before seen a Teacher who could do such things.”

The Pharisees also were astonished and offended, and while some of them believed in Jesus, most of them thought He should be punished for pretending to forgive sins. Now the punishment for that was to be stoned to death. And as the Pharisees walked away from the house with their long flowing robes and bright turbans, some of them said that any one who had such power from God was not likely to tell lies; but others said that to heal a man was no proof that He could forgive sins, and so they argued; and the common people, while believing in the power of Jesus, yet did not pay much heed to His teaching. And leaving this house, Jesus went back to Peter’s cottage, where He lived.

Remember from this story how good a thing is a true friend, for the friends of this young man did not give up when they could not get in by the door, but worked on till they got him in to Jesus by another way.

MATTHEW THE TAX-GATHERER.

CAPERNAUM, SPRING, A.D. 32.

In that country there were men who paid money to the Romans for the right to gather the taxes from the Jewish people, and who made money by oppressing and taxing them heavily. These men were called “Publicans;” and they were hated, for they charged toll at roads, bridges, quays, and markets, and asked money for each parcel of wool, cloth, wood, wine, fish, or other goods that passed through the town; and if the tax-gatherer were a Jew, he was hated all the more

for gathering the Roman taxes. Capernaum was a favourite town for taxes, for the great road from Damascus, and Syria, to Jerusalem and the sea, passed through it, and Matthew, a Jew, was the head tax-gatherer there, and he was rich. One day as he sat busy at his work, checking goods and taking payment, Jesus stopped at his toll in the sunny street, and said these simple words to him—

“Follow Me!” Matthew knew who Jesus was. He had often seen Him in the streets followed by the people, and had heard Him teach, and he resolved to go at once with Him, and give up his tax-gathering. He also gave a great dinner, and invited all the tax-gatherers of the town and their friends to meet Jesus, and to hear him say that he would no more keep the toll. His friends came gladly, and filled the house, to eat, drink, and talk with Jesus and His five disciples; but the Pharisees were shocked with Jesus for going with such people. Yet they were so curious to know what went on at the dinner that they could not stay away, and while they would not sit down and eat with Matthew's friends, they came into the large open square of his fine house, which was a common thing for strangers to do, and looked in at the doors and windows, to spy and criticise. When they saw Jesus actually sitting and eating with such people, though they did not care to speak to Him, they said to His disciples as they passed out and in—

“Why do you and your Master eat with tax-gatherers and bad people?” For they pretended to be too good even to speak to such people in the street, and whispered to each other with uplifted hands, as they looked in at the well furnished table, “See! He eateth with tax-gatherers and bad people!” The disciples told Jesus what they were saying, and turning to the Pharisees, He sent them away from the open door with these words—

“They that are well do not need a doctor, but only they that are ill. Go away and learn what those words of the prophet Hosea mean.

‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice;

And the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.’

For I am sent to call the wicked, not righteous people to become good." And Jesus took no further notice of them, and remained at Matthew's dinner, eating of his meat and bread, his oranges, pomegranates, melons, ripe purple grapes, and other beautiful fruits, which were on every rich man's table. And He spoke much to Matthew and his friends.

The Pharisees and Teachers of that time had a strange custom, which was to take no food for a day or two as a religious duty, and this they called fasting, and made a great show of it; and they watched Jesus day after day, and noticed that neither He nor His disciples had any fast days. Now John the Baptist's disciples had fast days; and shortly after Matthew's dinner, the Pharisees, finding fault with Jesus, said—

"John's disciples fast often, and pray, so also do the Pharisees and their disciples; but Thy disciples eat and drink." They were annoyed that while they starved themselves, Jesus, who was now a Teacher, and His disciples also, did not keep this somewhat unpleasant custom of the Teachers; but Jesus answered that His disciples had no reason to fast while He was with them, but that when He was taken away they would fast and mourn. He also told them that He taught new things, and that He would not try to join His new teaching to their old customs, for that would only make things worse; and to make His meaning clear, He told them these two short stories.

"No person mendeth an old cloak with a piece of new cloth, or else the new cloth will tear the old cloak, and the hole will be made worse. Also, no person putteth new wine into old leather bottles, for the new wine will ferment, and burst the old bottles, and both bottles and wine will be spoilt; but new wine must be put into new leather bottles, and both will be preserved." They who listened had often seen new wine bursting old hard leather bottles, that would not stretch, spilling the red wine; and they understood that Jesus meant to be bound by none of the old forms and customs of their Teachers. And

thus He let the Pharisees know that their rules were nothing to Him, and that He would teach what He thought was right ; not what had been laid down by other people.

Remember, then, how foolish it is to think thyself better than other people, and to refuse to speak with them ; for a really good person can never appear to be wicked.

THE TWELVE DISCIPLES.

HATTIN HILL, SPRING, A.D. 32.

It was usual for every great Teacher to have some men who went with him and helped him, and who were called disciples ; and Jesus was now about to choose twelve disciples from among His friends, and to explain to them and to the people, what were the great principles of His teaching. He therefore went away to be alone, as He often did when He had a difficult duty before Him. Leaving Capernaum in the afternoon, He walked round by the road along the West side of the Lake, and turning to His right hand, passed up through the olives and vines, into a long rocky gorge that led up to a range of cliffs, beyond which was a great plain covered with thyme, and grass and wild flowers. From this plain rose a hill called the "Horns of Hattin," because it had two peaks, like horns, and a grassy saddle between them. Climbing one of these peaks, He saw the blue Lake of Gennesaret below Him, and Mount Hermon capped with snow in the far distance, with hills, woods, and rivers between. And when the golden sun set, and sudden darkness came down, hiding the earth from sight, and opening the blue starry heavens overhead, He remained there alone, with the night wind blowing reed-music in the grass—remained in prayer and meditation all night ; and when the rising sun poured gold over the Gadarean hills, He came down again towards the green saddle to meet the people who were coming up from the Lake-side to find Him.

Calling His friends up to Him, He told them that He was about to ask twelve of them to be His disciples, who would

go with Him everywhere and teach with Him; and as He called them by their names, they came to Him, and stood apart from the rest. He chose *Peter*, the quick-tempered, warm-hearted fisherman, and *Andrew*, his younger brother; *John*, the gentle and loving, who, with Andrew, had been a disciple of John the Baptist; and *James*, John's brother, also a fisherman, and a man of quick temper; then the young man *Philip*, from the fishing village of Bethsaida; *Bartholomew*, from Cana, also called Nathanael, a learned man of singular goodness; *Matthew* of Capernaum, the tax-gatherer, who had joined them only a few days before, and who wrote the finest life of Jesus that can be written. All these men thou hast heard of before: but He also chose *Thomas* from Galilee, a brave man, with much common sense; and *James the Less*, and *Jude*, two brothers from Capernaum; and *Simon* of Galilee, who had been trained up in a fighting party, but had left the Zealots; and twelfth and last, *Judas* Iscariot, the only one who did not belong to Galilee, the country of Jesus, but to Judæa, near Jerusalem, the land of priests and Pharisees. And He called them Apostles.

Thus He chose the young men who were to be His closest friends, five, most likely eight of them, fishermen; five it is said being His own cousins; all, but one, men of Galilee, from near the Lake, free from the fear and influence of the Jerusalem priests, and true to their young Fellow-countryman. There in the morning sunlight they stood, with the long, stout sticks of countrymen in their hands, apart from the rest, of all men the best fitted to spread the new gospel, yet only a band of untrained fishermen. He might have chosen great speakers, clever arguers, scholars learned in the Bible, to dispute with the old doctors of the Law, or even rich men of the highest positions He could find. Nicodemus the Teacher, the friends He made in the Temple, and in Judæa, the officer of Capernaum—even the wise men of the East, where were they? Young fishermen! how unsuited for subtle theological discussions with learned Lawyers about questions of authority and tradition! But were they so unsuited?

Their message was not to be a message of the brain, but of the heart ; their guide, the in-dwelling Spirit of God. Their knowledge was to be gathered in humility from the lips and life of Jesus. Not with subtlety of reasoning, but with simplicity of truth were they to teach. Learning, position, would have been of little advantage to men who had everything to learn, and had to endure a common, a hard lot. They were to take His yoke of love and learn of Him, learn to speak in simplicity of thought and word, heavenly truths that would strike with all the force and clearness of a revelation which the wit of man would not be able to refute or withstand. But they had yet to hear Jesus explain the few great and beautiful principles which were to guide the disciples, and bidding them keep near Him, He went down the hill again to the people on the green level part.

While He was thus choosing His disciples, a large number had come up to the plain, and among them were people from all parts between distant Jerusalem and Judæa on the South, and the foreign cities of Tyre and Sidon on the North ; and many of them had brought sick persons that He might heal them. Walking among them, Jesus touched their sick, and many touched Him as He passed by, and He healed them all ; and withdrawing again with His disciples to a rising ground, He prepared to teach and to explain His message to this crowd of people, in the greatest address that has ever been listened to.

Remember, then, how Jesus prepared Himself for this great task by solitude, prayer, and thought ; and when thou hast any difficulty before thee, wait thou in silence upon God, and He will prepare thy mind afresh, and give thee wisdom and strength, which will keep thee calm and fearless.

Doing God's will as if it were thine own,
Yet trusting not thy strength, but His alone.

CONSIDER THE LILIES.

HATTIN HILL, SPRING, A.D. 32.

Upon a green mound on the hillside, under the blue Syrian sky, Jesus sat above the crowd gathered on the fragrant thymy floor of that great church between the hills; and never has there been such an open-air teaching in the world's history. The young Carpenter of Nazareth, with His outer cloak of dark blue thrown back, showing the white inner tunic that came down to His sandalled feet, despised by the professors of theology and doctors of the Law because He quoted not from the reasonings of men, yet confident, because He taught the truths of God, as He explained to the people the great principles of the new message which He and His disciples would deliver to the people. I cannot at this time tell thee all He said. When thou art old enough thou wilt read it for thyself in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew's Gospel; but I shall give thee parts of it.

His face is calm and beautiful as He looks down upon the standing people, and in the hush that follows the raising of His hand, His voice rings out clear and distinct, heard for a long distance, amid the stillness of the hills—

"Blessed are the lowly in spirit," He began, *"for Heaven is theirs."*

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"Blessed are the lowly in mind, for they shall get knowledge."

"Blessed are they who earnestly wish to be good, for they shall be satisfied."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

These simple, beautiful words told them of good in things which they did not know were blessed before. He did not stop to prove or explain these truths, but spoke them with authority. And turning to His disciples, He continued—

"Blessed are you when men shall punish you and say untrue things about you for My sake ; rejoice then, and be glad, for so were good men punished before you. You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine, that men shall see your good deeds and praise God. Whoever teacheth the truth shall be called great in Heaven ; but unless you are better than the Pharisees, you shall not have Heaven." And, speaking again to the people, He continued—

"Whoever is angry with his brother, doeth wrong ; and if thou art going to pray, and rememberest that thy brother hath something against thee, leave thy prayers ; go and be friends with thy brother, and then come and pray." Now, it was a very common thing for the people to use oaths, and their Teachers allowed them to do so. But Jesus said to them now—

"Swear not at all, neither by Heaven, nor by the earth, nor by Jerusalem, nor by thy head"—all of which were common oaths with the people. "But let your speaking be simple, saying only, 'Yes' and 'No,' for whatever is more than that is wicked."

"Your Teachers have also taught you," He continued, "to hate your enemies and love your friends ; but I tell you that you are to love your enemies ; do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that spitefully use you : and to him that striketh thee on one cheek, turn the other cheek also. Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that wisheth to borrow, turn not away. *Do to others as you would that they should do to you, for that is the whole Bible ;* for if you love only them that love you, or do good only to them that do good to you, you deserve no thanks. Even bad people do that. But you should love your enemies, do good and lend, despairing of no man ; that you may be true children of God, merciful as He is merciful, for God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, making His sun to shine on the bad and on the good, and sending His rain on the just and on the unjust. Therefore be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect." Thus Jesus gave them what has been called the golden rule of unselfishness, the children's Bible ; and told them of the beautiful truth that God is His

Father and our Father. Speaking next about money, He said—

“Do not heap up treasures on earth where moth and rust spoil, and thieves break in and steal; but gather treasures in Heaven, for where your treasure is, there will your thoughts be. The eye is the window of the mind: if thine eye be pure, thy whole mind shall be full of light; but if it be wicked, thy mind shall be full of darkness. Take care that the light which is in thee be not darkened. Thou canst not serve both the spirit of badness and the Spirit of goodness; one thou must hate, and one love.

“Do not be too anxious about what you shall eat, and drink, and wear. Think of the ravens.” And as He spoke He pointed to the passing birds that flew with black wings in the bright sky overhead—“They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, but your Father in Heaven feedeth them. Why are you anxious about clothing? *Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these!* Do not say, What shall we eat, What shall we drink? How shall we be clothed? but seek goodness first, and all these things will follow. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you Heaven.” He knew that on their way to the hills that morning they had seen the wild lilies of the field in all their beauty—sown by the winds, watered by the clouds, coloured by the sun—in the green moist hollows by the springs, growing without the help of man, and from them he drew the finest picture in the world’s books; for Solomon, in purple robes and crown of gold, was the wisest, richest among kings, and yet the simple lily by the roadside was fairer far than he, for the hand of man could neither paint the scarlet shadows on its velvet flowers, nor weave the shining texture of its leaves of green. Speaking to His disciples again, He continued—

“A disciple is not above his Master, but every disciple, when he is perfected, shall be like his Master. Do not judge each other. Do not notice thy neighbour’s faults and

forget thine own, for how canst thou say to him, "Give up thy faults," when thou dost not give up thine own? That is hypocrisy; but first give up thine own faults, and then thou wilt see clearly how to advise thy neighbour." He told them next how to pray, and gave them a beautiful short prayer, of which I shall speak at another time; and He also told them to ask for the Spirit of God of which He spoke to the woman at the well of Sychar, and said that all in that crowd who asked God would receive His Spirit. Of their false Teachers, He said—

"Beware of false Teachers, who look kind, but are wicked. You shall know them by what they do, not by what they say. Good men are known by their good deeds, for grapes do not grow on thorns, nor figs on thistles." He was now near the end of His address, and the boldness of the young Carpenter impressed them all when He said—

"Not every person that saith, Lord! to Me, shall have Heaven, but only he that doeth the will of God My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me, 'Lord! Lord! did we not heal maniacs and foretell events, and do many great things in Thy Name?' And I will answer, 'I never knew you: depart from Me, you who do wickedness.'" He then put this question to all who were listening to Him—

"Why do you call Me 'Lord,' and do not what I tell you?" In the pause which followed, no one answered Him, and He closed His address with a story with two pictures, which divided the crowd before Him into those who were for Him, and those who were against Him.

"Every one," He said, "who heareth these words of Mine, and doeth them, is like a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and the rains and floods and winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not: for it was built upon a rock; and every one who heareth these words of Mine and doeth them not, is like a foolish man who built his house upon sand; and the rains and floods and winds blew and smote upon that house, and it fell: for it was built upon sand."

His voice ceased. He had ended His great address; and,

with these warning words ringing in their ears, the crowd began slowly to break up and scatter homewards down the hill. And as the people went away, they said to each other what they had often said before—that they were astonished at His teaching, and amazed at the grave authority, as of absolute truth, with which He spoke · for He spoke not like their old Teachers, who did not venture to say anything new, and never tired of quoting the authority of great men for every word they said.

And thou, too, must decide whether thou wilt build thy life upon a rock or upon sand, on firm goodness or on shifting wickedness, for one of these thou must do. And go not away, as many in that crowd did, without settling one thing or another, for that is weak, if not wicked, but choose thou to follow goodness.

THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

JERUSALEM, SPRING, A.D. 32.

From the Hill of Hattin, Jesus returned to Peter's house at Capernaum, where He stayed a few days; then He went again to Jerusalem with His disciples to attend a Festival, the name of which is not known—perhaps the Festival of Purim, in March, perhaps the Passover in April.

Beside the Sheep Gate at Jerusalem, through which sheep and cattle were driven into the city, there was a large pool of water cut out of the rock, called "Bethesda," meaning "The house of mercy;" and at certain times the water moved, with air bells rising up through it, and the people bathed in it. There are such pools at Jerusalem still. It had a coloured pavement all round it, with steps going down into the water, and a roof over it, with five porches to enter by. And the people believed it was an angel that moved the water, and that whoever went in first would be healed; and every day poor sick, lame, and blind people lay round the pool, watching for the moving of the water.

One Sabbath day, as Jesus was going into the city by this gate, He went over to the pool, where the sick people were,

and going among them, He saw a poor old man who had not walked for thirty-eight years—which was seven years before Jesus was born. For years he had been carried, day after day in the morning to this pool, and taken back at night, always failing to get in first when the water moved ; and as he lay on his mat, with his eyes turned wistfully towards the sparkling pool, Jesus said—

“Dost thou wish to be healed?” to which the man answered in a hopeless voice—

“Sir, I have no one to put me in when the water is moved ; but while I am coming, another one steppeth down before me.” He had often tried, but only being able to crawl, while others walked, he had no chance ; and Jesus, pitying him, said the same thrilling words to him which He spoke to the palsied young man at Capernaum—

“Rise, take up thy mat, and walk.” And the old man rose to his feet, and stooping down rolled up his mat, earnestly thanking Jesus for healing him, and walked out of the porch, carrying his mat, while the people gazed at him in wonder. But the Pharisees had a little rule that it was wrong to carry anything on the Sabbath, even a loaf of bread, but they allowed two persons to carry one loaf between them ; nor would they allow any one to walk a mile, or light a fire on the Sabbath, although they contrived to enjoy good feasts themselves on that day. The man had not carried his bed far along the street before some one, intending to have him punished, stopped him, saying angrily—

“This is the Sabbath day. It is not right for thee to carry thy mat.” To which the old man, excusing himself, replied—

“He who healed me, told me to take up my mat, and carry it away.” But the Pharisee said sharply—

“Who told thee to do this?” Now, the man did not know who Jesus was, and said so ; and although they went back together to the pool of Bethesda, they could not find Jesus, for He had gone away. After making the man put down

his mat, and promise to tell whenever he found out who had healed him, he was allowed to go home.

Some days after this, Jesus met the old man in the Golden Temple, and knowing what kind of man he was, He said to him—

“Now that thou art healed, be wicked no more, lest a worse thing happen to thee.” The man now knew that it was Jesus who had healed him, and out of fear, he went and told the Pharisees. Now the Pharisees were most particular about their Sabbath rules, and when they heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, He who had cleared the Temple, and had already healed two people on the Sabbath day at Capernaum, who now dared, in Jerusalem itself, to break two of their rules in one day by healing a man, and telling him to carry his mat, they were very angry, and resolved to watch Jesus, and have Him punished. What wouldst thou think of men who found fault with a doctor for curing people on the Sabbath? And yet the priests of Jerusalem began to follow Jesus about, and to annoy Him. But He replied to them—

“My Father in Heaven worketh until now, and I work.” This only made them more angry, for they exclaimed—

“He calleth God His Father, making Himself equal with God!” And they resolved still more to have Him punished.

Nevertheless He went every day to the Golden Temple to teach in the great pillared porches, where the other Teachers were, and there He met His bitter enemies, the priests, and had discussions with them, defending Himself for calling God His Father; and as it was a Festival time, many people heard Him, as He spoke, saying—

“I can do nothing without the help of God, My Father in Heaven. He loveth Me, and showeth Me all things that He doeth, and greater things than those that I have done will He show Me, that you may wonder. He that knoweth not Me, knoweth not God Who sent Me; and he that heareth My words, and believeth on God Who sent Me shall have Heaven.

“I judge from what I hear; and I judge righteously, because I do not seek Mine own way, but God’s way, who sent Me. He is the Witness of the truth of what I say, and not I Myself. You sent messengers to John the Baptist, to ask if I am the Christ; and he answered you. He was indeed a great man, and for a time you praised him. But the witness which I have is greater even than John, greater than all men; the things which God hath given Me to do, they show that God sent Me, and that He is My Father.

“But you Pharisees have neither heard nor seen God, nor have you His Spirit in you, for you do not believe My words, whom God hath sent. You read your Bibles, and by them you hope to have Heaven; and yet you do not see that the Bible speaketh of Me; and you refuse to come to Me that you may get that Heaven for which you seek. You have not God’s Spirit in you, or you would believe Me when I come in His Name; but if some other one were to come in his own name, you would believe him.

“Do not suppose that I will blame you before God. Moses will do so—Moses in whom you trust; for, if you believed Moses, you would also believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you believe not what Moses wrote, how can I expect you to believe what I say?”

Thus He told the priests, in the presence of the crowds who were listening out in the open court of the Temple at that Festival time, that He was Jesus the Christ sent by God, of whom Moses wrote, and if they did not believe His words, to believe from His good deeds and good life that He spoke the truth. But they only hated Him the more, for what He said, yet they did not dare to touch Him, for the common people liked Him. But soon the priests and Pharisees forced Him to leave Jerusalem again, nor could He even teach in Judæa as He passed through it on His way home to Galilee, for the priests would not allow Him. And thus early were the churches of Judæa closed by the priests of Jerusalem against Him, for although He had only been a Teacher for a little

over a year, yet they would not allow Him to teach there again.

Remember, then, that Jesus did not care for the little Sabbath rules of men, who said that what was good on Saturday was wicked on the Sabbath, and that he broke these rules to free the people.

IN THE BARLEY-FIELDS.

JERICH0, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

Hast thou ever gone through a narrow foot-path in the barley-fields in Autumn, when the ripe yellow grain, taller than thy shoulder, nodded to thee from each side, holding out here and there a heavy spiked head level with thy face, for thee to pluck it?

On the Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples were walking back to Galilee, and their path lay through a barley field, perhaps in the fruitful plain of Jericho, for although it was still early Summer, the barley was ripe—it ripens there in April—and His disciples plucked the ears of barley, and, rubbing them between their hands, blew off the chaff, and ate the grain, for they were hungry, and this was a common thing to do in that country. Among those who followed them were spies from Jerusalem, sent to watch Jesus, and they were glad to see this, for they had found Him again breaking their little Sabbath rules, which said that to pluck an ear of barley was to reap, and to rub it, was to thresh, and so the disciples were reaping and threshing, they said, on the Sabbath. And pretending to be much shocked, they went up to Jesus, talking loudly, and pointing at His disciples—

“Sir, Thy disciples are doing what it is not right to do on the Sabbath,” they exclaimed, expecting Him to call them back. But He let them go on plucking and eating, for He was about to show the spies that He cared nothing for their foolish and oppressive Sabbath rules, and turning to those who spoke to him, He told them that their Sabbath rules were only small and foolish customs, which did harm; and He gave

instances from the Bible in which such customs had been set aside, saying—

“Have you ever read in your Bibles what King David did when he was poor and hungry? He went into the Great Tabernacle, when Abiathar was the High-priest there, and ate the shew-bread, which none but the priests might eat, and gave it also to his followers.” Now the Pharisees knew of this, and that no one had ever blamed King David for breaking a little rule in order to feed his starving men. “Have you not also read,” Jesus continued, “how that the priests work in the Temple on the Sabbath day, and do no wrong? I am greater than the Temple!” The Pharisees now saw that they had been too hasty. They did not expect that this young Carpenter would know His Bible so well. But Jesus was not done with them, for He told them that they did not understand the most important things in their Bible, saying—

“If you had known what these words of the Bible mean,

‘I desire mercy, and not, sacrifice;

And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings,’ you would not have blamed the innocent,” pointing, as He spoke, to His disciples, and adding, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath,” meaning that it was made to relieve, and not to oppress men,—and He ended with these words, which filled the Pharisees with amazement and anger, and His disciples with pleasure, “I am Lord of the Sabbath.” Thus, before letting the spies go, He told them that His disciples were innocent of any fault, and that His authority was higher than that of their masters at Jerusalem. With scowling faces, the Pharisees retired, defeated and humbled before the common people; told that their rules were wrong, and that they should be more merciful. This was the fourth time that Jesus had broken their Sabbath rules; and He resumed His journey through the fields towards the Fords of Jordan, and Galilee.

Thus Jesus showed that in the true meaning of the Bible the Sabbath is as free as any other day for doing what is good in. There is nothing in the day that can make what thou

doest good or bad, for the day which is now called the Sabbath is not the same day that was called the Sabbath then ; nor is it now kept on the same day of the week, nor at the same hour of the day. Our Sabbath is from twelve on Saturday night to twelve on Sunday night ; their Sabbath was from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, and whatever is right to do at one minute to twelve o'clock, can never become wrong to do at one minute past twelve, by the mere passing of the hour.

Do thou remember, then, that while the Sabbath is a day fitted for rest from work and for special worship, that all days are alike good, and that whatever the Spirit of Jesus in thy conscience telleth thee is right to do on the Sabbath, that is right for thee.

STRETCH OUT THINE HAND.

GALILEE, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

It was now warm Summer-time, and the trees were in full leaf beside the little brooks that had been dried up with the sun, and the roads were hot and dusty. As Jesus went through Galilee on His way home to Capernaum, He taught in the churches of the villages through which He passed, and one Sabbath day it became known that He was to teach in a certain church, and a crowd of people came to hear Him, and Pharisees came to spy. There also came in a man with a withered hand, and they watched to see what Jesus would do.

The Pharisees sat in their places at the head of the church, and looked grim and severe when Jesus with His beautiful face and white tunic entered and passed up through the people and sat down beside them—a Teacher also, but of a very different kind. The service began, and as every one expected, when the time for speaking came, Jesus rose, and, going to the Teacher's seat, began to speak to the people, but took no notice of the man with the withered hand, who was sitting a little way off. The Pharisees, who could think of nothing but

His breaking their Sabbath rules, soon interrupted Jesus with this pointed question—

“Is it right to heal on the Sabba’ h day?” they asked. A glance at their stern faces told Jesus that again they wished to dispute the Sabbath question, and that the poor man was to be the cause of the dispute, and He at once accepted their challenge, saying to the man—

“Rise up, and stand out on the floor,” and the man rose and stood out in the stone passage, and everybody saw that his hand was withered by his side.

“Which of you,” Jesus said, speaking to all the people, “whose sheep has fallen into a hole on the Sabbath would not lift it out? Is a sheep, then, better than a man?” And turning to the stern-faced Pharisees, He said—

“I ask you, is it right to do good or to do wickedness on the Sabbath day? To save life, or to destroy it?” But they would not answer. They were afraid to answer Him, lest they should make some mistake; and as He looked at the row of cruel hypocrites who, pretending to worship, had come there to plot mischief, His face flushed, and His dark eyes flashed with anger. Sitting with grave, hard faces, not one of them would say that yonder poor man might be healed; they would rather he went maimed for life than admit that Jesus was right. Looking from one to another of them, Jesus was grieved with their cruel hearts, but when His eyes turned to the expectant face of the poor man, He said in a clear ringing voice—

“Stretch out thine hand!” And at once the man lifted up his hand, whole and well, and all the people saw it, and the Pharisees also. Were the Pharisees glad to see it? No! They could not bear the sight, but filled with anger, rose in haste, and catching up their long robes, they hurried out of the church, leaving Jesus to teach what He pleased.

Once more they had been defeated on the Sabbath question by the young Carpenter; and they consulted together. Now, there were certain violent men called Herodians, who hated Jesus, but they also jeered at the Pharisees, yet the

Pharisees made friends of them, and plotted with them how Jesus might be destroyed. And while they whispered together outside, Jesus dismissed the people, and withdrew from the church, and hearing of their plotting, He left that village, and went on towards Capernaum. And everywhere He went through the sunny country, the people left their fields and gardens, their markets and shops, and came to Him, to listen and to have their sick healed, for they loved Him ; but Jesus told them not to speak of the wonders He did, for He wished to go about quietly. This is the only time thou wilt read of Jesus being angry, though thou wilt hear of Him weeping and rejoicing, for He could hate and love, and felt anger and grief and joy, just like thee or me ; but His nature was so beautifully balanced, and in such perfect control, that His passions never carried Him away into wickedness.

Thou, my child, wilt sometimes hear Jesus spoken of as One who was never angry, but that is not correct. Yet if thou wouldst be like Him, and do no wickedness when anger is upon thee, thou must keep quiet, and do nothing until thine anger has passed away, and then thou wilt be safe to speak and act wisely.

THE OFFICER'S SERVANT.

CAPERNAUM, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

Walking through Galilee and down to the Lake-side, by the rich plain of Gennesaret, where the grain was standing in fields of waving yellow that were nearly ready for reaping, Jesus was soon at home again in Peter's house at Capernaum. There He remained some days, and then, taking His disciples with Him, He went on a journey among the towns and villages round the shores of the Lake. He taught the people in the open air, and, as before, they came long distances to hear Him, going with Him from place to place, the crowds at times being so great, that He told His disciples to follow Him on the water with a boat, so that He might get into it when the crowd of people pressing on Him to touch Him,

was too great. He also taught them from the boat as He had done before, and when He healed any one He told them not to talk about it. He would visit in this way the splendid town of Tiberias, with its warm springs that flowed steaming into the Lake, touch the rocky shore of Magdala, and the grassy meadows of Bethsaida, and sail under the yellow cliffs of Gadara, and see the tall, feathery palms at the mouth of the Jordan, and the great oleander bushes that with their sweet scented blossoms of red and white lined the Lake's edge at the plain of Gennesaret. It would take Jesus several days to go round the Lake in this way, for it was twenty-five miles round, and He returned again to Capernaum.

Now there was a Romam officer called a Centurion, for he had charge of a hundred soldiers, who lived at Capernaum, whose favourite servant was ill, and though not a Jew, he was a good man, and was much liked by the people for his kindness. And when he heard of the return of Jesus, he went to the chief men of the town and asked them to get Jesus to come and heal his servant, as he did not like to ask himself. And they came to Jesus and praised the good Centurion, saying—

“He well deserveth that Thou shouldst do this for him, for he loveth our people, and hath built us the church in which we worship.” And they begged Him to go with them to the Centurion's house, and Jesus consented, and word was sent on before, to tell that they were coming. While Jesus was still on the way, some men met Him, coming from the Centurion with this message, which they gave before the people—

“Lord ! our friend bade us tell thee not to trouble to come, for he doth not think himself worthy that Thou shouldst enter his house, nor good enough to come to Thee, wherefore he hath sent us ; but he saith if Thou wilt but say the word, his servant will be healed. He also saith that he is a man with soldiers under him, and when he commandeth one to go, he goeth, or to come, he cometh, or telleth a servant to do a thing, he doeth it.” The message meant that Jesus, being a

Jew, might not care to go into a foreigner's house, and that He could command the servant's sickness, just as the Centurion did his soldiers. When Jesus heard this message, He wondered to find so much trust and humility in a foreign soldier, where it was least to be expected. How different from the suspicious Jews and fault-finding Pharisees ! and turning round as He stood on the road, He said to His disciples and the people who were following Him—

“I say, I have not found so much trust as this among Jews. And I tell you that many strangers from all parts of the world shall enter Heaven, and many Jews will be cast out into darkness.” And He bade the messengers go back and tell the Centurion that because of his trust in Him, He would do what he had asked. And the men returned to the Centurion's house and found him no longer sad, for his servant was healed, and they told him all that Jesus had said. But the people were displeased with Jesus for saying that strangers would enter the Kingdom of Heaven and Jews be left out. They believed that none but Jews would have any part in their great Kingdom, and that there would be a splendid feast when it was established, to which Jews only would sit down. And the Teachers and many of the people were more than ever set against Jesus for telling them the truth, that the Kingdom of Heaven is free to all who know and obey God.

Remember, then, it is not whether a man is black or white, rich or poor, that is the test of Heaven—for all are equal before God—but whether thou art good or bad.

THE WIDOW'S SON.

NAIN, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

Leaving Capernaum, Jesus started with His disciples to walk to the village of Nain, which was twenty-five miles away. As usual, they left early in the morning, before the Summer sun was hot, following the path by the shore, and fording the little streams that flowed from the springs in the plain of

Gennesaret, then, leaving the Lake, they climbed up into the hills by the side of a deep and rocky watercourse among thick trees, to gain the hot open road leading them round the foot of the beautiful Mount Tabor that rose high above them, green to its very top with oak and terebinth, with here and there a white rock jutting out. Perhaps it was the afternoon of the second day when they descended into the fruitful plain of Endor, where the reapers had begun their harvest work, and towards evening they saw the white houses of the village of Nain on the side of a hill. It had walls about it, and a gate, and the sun was setting over the purple Carmel hills as Jesus and the people who had come with Him climbed the steep stony road that led up to the village. When they were close to the gate, they met a funeral procession coming slowly out, carrying some one to be buried in the burying-ground where the rose trees grew among the white stones, a little way off on the hillside.

First came two men blowing doleful flutes, then women who tossed their arms above their heads, chanting a low sad tune as they mourned and touched their cymbals, then came a weeping woman with clothes torn in her grief, the mother of the young man, her only son, who was being carried behind her on a bier of basket-work by four men, and after them followed a number of sorrowing friends. It was the custom for everybody to pay the greatest respect to a funeral. And Jesus was told that the young man was the only son of the woman, who was a widow, and, thinking perhaps of His own mother, He was very sorry for the poor lonely woman going out in the dusk of evening to bury her dear son. Those who were coming up the narrow path stood on one side to let the funeral pass, but when the woman came to where Jesus was, He said to her—

“Weep not!” And going over to the bearers of the body, He laid His hand on the bier and stopped them, and the people gathered round Him as the men lowered their burden to the ground. Looking into the young man’s face, Jesus said—

“Young man, I say to thee, Rise !” And the young man opened his eyes, and sat up, and began to ask them where he was, and what it all meant ; and speaking gently to him, Jesus gave him back to his mother. The people were amazed, and this procession, once so sad, returned rejoicing through the gate with the young man walking in their midst ; and they praised God, and said, as they went through the village—

“God hath come down to His people. A great prophet hath come amongst us !” But gladdest of all was the widow-mother, as, kissing her dear son, she took him back to her quiet home. The news soon spread through the country, for this was the first person Jesus had made alive again ; but neither His wonders nor His kindness had any effect upon the priests, who only hated and feared Him the more.

Remember, then, the pity of Jesus for this poor weeping woman, for she did not speak to Him, perhaps did not even see Him in her grief, but He tenderly felt all her mother's love and sorrow.

JOHN'S MESSAGE.

NEAR NAIN, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

John had now been about a year in prison. He had re-proved King Antipas and Herodias his queen, for wickedness, and this so annoyed the queen that she got the king, who feared John, to put him into prison in Castle Machærus, the Black Castle, near the deserted Dead Sea. It was a huge tower upon a hill-top. There was a splendid palace and town for soldiers built lower down, but beyond that, on all sides, were ravines of black bare rocks, and deserts of sand, a wild place of banishment ; but by leave of the King, John's disciples were allowed to see him. Friends coming in told him what Jesus was doing ; of His breaking the Sabbath rules, drinking wine, and eating food with wicked people, and John's disciples argued with each other as to whether

He were the Christ or no. John had very little doubt; but, in order to settle the minds of his disciples, he sent off two of them to see Jesus for themselves, and ask the question, "Art Thou the Christ that should come, or shall we look for another?" It took them about three days to go from Machærus, across the Jordan, and up the hills to the neighbourhood of Nain, and there they found Jesus, with a number of people round Him, healing the sick and teaching, and they stood and watched, and then going forward, said—

"We are John's disciples, and he hath sent us to ask Thee whether Thou art the Christ who should come, or shall we look for another?" After what they had seen, this was a foolish question, and Jesus sent them away quickly, saying—

"Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind are made to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dead are raised, while the poor are told about Heaven." Adding, as a caution to themselves, "Blessed are they who find no offence in Me." The men left at once with their message, talking over all they had seen and heard as they went back to John, for they no longer doubted that Jesus was the Christ. Now Jesus had not praised John whilst the men were present, nor said He was sorry for his imprisonment, but when they were gone, He gave John the highest praise to the people that a man has ever got; and many of the people who stood round remembered John in his camel hair dress as he taught in wild places, and by the deep Jordan.

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see?" Jesus exclaimed. "A feeble reed shaken with the wind? A man clothed in soft clothing? They who dress finely and live delicately, are in kings' palaces. Did you go to see a prophet? Yes, and much more than a prophet, for there is no greater man than John the Baptist." There were some in that crowd who rejoiced, for they had always liked John, but there were others, Pharisees and Teachers of the

Law, who had been against him as they were against Jesus now, and seeing them standing gloomy and silent, Jesus said to them—

“I have seen little children playing at funerals and marriages in a sunny market-place, some of whom were gloomy and would play at nothing, while the others called to them, and said, ‘We have played music to you and you will not dance, we have sung mournfully to you and you will not weep.’ Now, you men are like these children; for John came neither eating nor drinking, and you called him mad; now I have come, eating and drinking, and you call Me glutton, wine-drinker, friend of tax-gatherers and wicked people.” Thus He showed that nothing would please these men, for they did not wish to be pleased; and as He thought of the learned Teachers who would not believe anything He told them, and of the ignorant country people who listened gladly to every word, He exclaimed, in thankful prayer, as He looked up—

“I thank Thee, O! My Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that Thou hast hid the things of Heaven from wise and learned men, and hast made them known to simple people; for so it seemeth right to Thee.” Turning again to the people who were earnestly watching everything He did, He exclaimed in a passionate, yearning appeal, full of tenderest beauty—

“All things have been given to Me by My Father in Heaven. *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My commands upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls, for My commands are easy and My burden is light.*” Thus He pled with them to come into His Kingdom of Heaven in the world. How different from their other Teachers! whose rules, customs, and laws were more than the people could bear or ever obey. They had never asked the people to come to them and find rest as Jesus now pleaded with them to come to Him. They pointed only to cold, hard laws, He pointed to His living Self, and many hearts turned to the young Carpenter of Nazareth, as the people went away to their homes that Summer day.

Remember, then, that love is the burden which Jesus asks thee to bear, love which makes all commands light, the love which makes thee glad to do what thy mother and father tell thee, that is the kind of love which thou art to have for Jesus.

MARY MAGDALENE.

NEAR NAIN, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

A wealthy Pharisee called Simon, who was interested in what Jesus had said, invited Him to dine at his house. He wished to hear more, and felt bound to extend common hospitality to this young Teacher, and Jesus went with him. Simon's house was large, built with an open courtyard in the middle, into which any person could come, with flowers growing there to make it bright, and trees to shade it, while broad-leaved vines and other creeping plants climbed up to the flat roof and round the small windows that looked out into the court. It was the custom always to take off their shoes before entering a house, for the floors of rich men's houses were covered with bright soft mats, and the people lay with their feet upon the couches. At the house door a servant usually took off the stranger's sandals, and washed his feet, and dressed his hair, and when he came into the room the master of the house gave him a kiss of welcome, saying, "The Lord bless thee." But when Jesus—hot, tired, dusty—entered Simon's house, He received none of these attentions from the servants, nor was he even welcomed by Simon as He went into the fine dining-room, with its soft silk pillows, scented woods, gilded walls, and rare curtains and flowers. He had been asked in out of curiosity, not friendship. The guests were on couches round small low tables, some sitting, some lying, and through the open windows people looked into the shaded room from the white, sunny court outside, and there was a constant going out and in of servants and friends by the wide-open door.

When the dinner had gone on for some time, from his table at the head of the room, Simon observed a beautiful young

woman whom he knew, come in by the door and with a glance at the guests, go quietly round, till she stood at the feet of Jesus ; and he wondered what she meant by coming into his house. But she had heard Jesus say, "*Come unto Me, and I will give you rest ;*" she was sorry for her wickedness, and wishing to show her gratitude and love to Jesus, she had bought a beautiful and costly alabaster flask of spikenard perfume to give Him. Now alabaster is a fine kind of stone, white, sparkling like snow, streaked with clear lines, and so brittle that thou couldst break it in thy hand. She had this precious little flask hidden in her breast, and as she stood near Jesus the recollections of her life came over her, her love went out to the One who had turned her back, and her hot tears dropped silently upon His bare feet. Then, kneeling, she clasped His travel-stained feet in her hands, kissing them again and again, and wiping them with her long dark hair that fell over them as she bent down. Grateful that He did not send her away, with a sudden impulse she took from her breast the little flask of perfume which she had intended for His head, and breaking the alabaster between her hands, she poured the precious oil upon His feet, as with disordered tresses and tear-stained face, she sank sobbing on the floor. She knew she had no right to be in that room, unveiling her beauty before men, but regardless of what people might say, she had poured out her love before Jesus, and with dark eyes bent down she waited His rebuke or praise. The strong sweet smell, drew the attention of everyone in the room to what Mary had done, but, as is common in that country, no one took any notice of her, and Jesus remained silent. Simon was indignant ; for he considered Mary of Magdala too low a person for him even to speak to, and thought that Jesus was a very strange Teacher indeed, to allow a woman to touch Him ; but it was not his place to interfere between Jesus and the beautiful woman who seemed to love Him, and he said nothing.

"If this young Teacher were really from God," he thought to himself, "He would know that this is a wicked woman who toucheth Him." If Simon had met Mary in the street, he

would have crossed to the other side, for Pharisees considered themselves too good to speak to a woman in the street. Jesus knew what was passing in Simon's mind, and, after a little looking towards him, He said—

“Simon, I have something to say to thee.”

“Speak on, Teacher,” was Simon's grave reply.

“A man once lent money to two persons,” Jesus said, “five hundred pence to one, and fifty pence to the other, and when they could not pay him back, he forgave them both. Tell me, Simon, which of these men will love Him most?”

“I suppose the one to whom he forgave the most,” he replied.

“Thou hast answered rightly,” and continuing in a voice which surprised the Pharisee, Jesus said—

“Seest thou this woman, Simon?” pointing as He spoke to Mary, who now looked up at Jesus with her earnest beautiful face. “When I came into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet, but she hath washed them with her tears. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but she hath not ceased to kiss My feet. Thou didst not put oil on My head, but she hath poured perfume on My feet. He loveth little who is forgiven, little, but she loveth much, and her wickedness, which is great, shall be forgiven.” Then, turning from Simon to Mary, whose face was radiant with joy, He continued—

“Woman, thy sins are forgiven.” Simon was amazed! He had had his house filled with people to meet Jesus, and through the midst of them had passed this woman; and now, caught with a little story by this young Countryman, in words the wisdom of which he could not dispute, he had been severely rebuked at his own table! Mary was also astonished. She had come to make a humble offering, not expecting to hear her simple act held up as an example to Simon the rich Pharisee, nor to be told, with a look from Jesus which she would never forget, that all the faults of her past life were forgiven! Some of the people who were at the table now began to whisper to each other, saying, “Who is this that can even forgive sins?” But Jesus paid no heed to their whisper-

ings, but waiting till the dinner was over, He rose, and as He went out He sent Mary away with these beautiful words—

“Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.” And Mary followed Jesus out into the sunshine a new creature, but not to go back to her old life, for she followed Him, along with other women, till His death, and was the first to see him when He rose again. And we know her now by the ever beautiful name of Mary Magdalene.

Remember then how she pressed in to the very feet of Jesus, and that thou, too, mayest at any time lay thy faults and thy sorrows before Him, and hear His voice saying to thee, “Go in peace!”

’Tis His, the gentle voice we hear,
Soft as the breath of even,
That checks each fault, that calms each fear,
And speaks of Heaven.

FALSE PHARISEES.

GALILEE, SUMMER, A.D. 32.

From the neighbourhood of the village of Nain, Jesus went on His second journey through the numerous towns and villages of Galilee that were scattered over the hills, valleys, and plains extending from the Carmel hills to the mountains of Lebanon. Everywhere He went, He saw the country people in the fields cutting down the ripe grain. His twelve disciples and a number of friends went with Him, among whom were some women, who had joined them, including Johanna, an officer’s wife; Susanna, the mother of two of His disciples; Salome, the mother of two more; the beautiful Mary Magdalene, and others. It was now midsummer, with hot dusty roads, the grass on the hillsides was scorched brown with the sun, and there was no water in the brooks, yet He went on foot, teaching now in a church, now under the shade of a spreading green tree, and it took Him some weeks to finish the journey.

At one place He healed a blind and dumb maniac, and the

people were astonished when they saw that the poor man could see and speak, and they wondered if He were not indeed the Christ. But when the Pharisees of the place saw His power, they made up a wicked falsehood to deceive the people, telling them solemnly as their old Teachers, that Jesus had the spirit of evil in Him, which gave Him power to heal maniacs ; and as the people believed in witchcraft and such foolish things, they also believed this wicked thing which their Teachers said. Now, nothing gave Jesus greater pain than this accusation of evil. To be told that His power was the power of wickedness and not goodness, vexed and excited Him much ; and the people also came in such numbers to see and hear Him, and He had to work so constantly, that He had not time to take proper food and rest, and it began to injure His health. Even some of His own friends said that He was going out of His mind with excitement, and wished for His own sake, to take Him away by force from among the people to a quiet place to rest ; and they watched Him from day to day, and sent word to His mother in Nazareth of His danger.

Hearing of this new stir in Galilee, the priests in Jerusalem sent some of their number to make inquiries and watch Jesus, and to tell the people that He was a cheat and not a true Teacher. When they came, they also repeated the same wicked falsehood, saying that He was helped by the spirit of evil, which gave Him power to heal maniacs, and coming to Him, they called upon Him to do something wonderful before them, knowing that He would refuse, as He had done before.

“Show us a sign,” they said, “that Thou art from God.” For a time He paid no attention to them, then He determined to expose their wicked falsehood, and calling upon the people and the Pharisees to listen, He said—

“These Pharisees tell you that I have the spirit of evil in Me, by which I heal maniacs. But why should wickedness put out wickedness? If that were true, wickedness would soon come to an end. Now, some of your own good men heal maniacs also. If I heal them by the power of evil, by what power do they heal them? Judge Me by them. But if I, by

the Spirit of God, heal them, then the kingdom of Heaven is come near you. No one can go into a strong man's house and take his things, unless he first overcome the strong man. I have overcome the spirit of evil. *Whoever is not on My side is against Me.*" Then, turning upon the Pharisees who had uttered the wicked falsehood, He continued—

"You shall be forgiven every kind of wickedness, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God. Whoever speaketh against Me shall be forgiven, but whoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit of God shall not be forgiven. A man is either good or bad, and a good man is known by what he does. But you Pharisees! ye children of vipers! how can you who are wicked, say good things, for the tongue speaketh what is in the heart. But I tell you that for every idle word that you speak, you shall give an account; and by your words shall you be judged." This was a burning rebuke to those mean Pharisees who had tried to besmirch His purity with their false tongues, seeking to get the superstitious people to believe on their high authority that He was only a wicked juggler, a dealer in black arts, and in league with wickedness itself, that they might turn the people away from Him. Was there ever a fouler lie than to say that the pure soul of Jesus was filled with an evil spirit? He had answered His accusers with such force that a woman in the crowd exclaimed in her joy—

"Blessed is the woman that is Thy mother, and the breasts which nursed Thee!"

"Nay," Jesus answered gently, "say rather, Blessed are the people who hear My words and obey them." Then one of the Lawyers and Pharisees in the crowd again called sneeringly to Him—

"Teacher! we wish to see a sign from Thee, that Thou art from God?" But looking at the calm hard faces of these spies from Jerusalem, He replied—

"This is a wicked age. You ask a sign, but no sign shall be given you but the sign of Jonah of old. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale, so shall I be three days and three nights in the grave. As Jonah was a sign to

the wicked city of Nineveh to repent of its wickedness, so am I a sign to you. The men of Nineveh shall condemn you, for they were sorry when they heard the preaching of Jonah, and I am greater than he. The Queen of the South shall condemn you, for she came from Arabia to hear the wisdom of King Solomon, and a greater than Solomon is here."

In the meantime His mother and brothers had come from Nazareth. They had heard that He was in danger of hurting Himself with work, and they had come to take Him away with them, but they could not get near Him for the crowd of people who were standing closely packed together, and they waited outside, a middle-aged woman, with a sweet gentle face and brown hair touched with grey, and her tall sons; for Mary knew that the people would not think of the health of Jesus. Word was passed through the crowd that they had come, and some one, interrupting Jesus, called out—

"Thy mother and brothers stand outside, wishing to speak with Thee."

"Who is My mother? Who are My brothers?" He replied; and pointing to His group of disciples, "See My mother and My brothers, for whoever doeth the will of My Father in Heaven, he is My brother, sister, mother." And He ceased speaking for that day. He meant that the work of His Father in Heaven had greater claims upon Him than even His mother. But when the crowd broke up she found Him, and tried to persuade Him to come away with her from the heat and fever of these constant crowds, to the quiet hills of Nazareth and her little vine-clad cottage, there to rest and grow strong again, though she soon saw that there was no truth in what she had been told, that His mind had been affected with the excitement. Jesus did not go with her, however; but she remained with Him for a time.

And thou wilt remember never to mention the names of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, excepting with great reverence and at suitable times. Some things in life must be kept sacred and apart, and these are chief among them.

THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE.

GALILEAN VILLAGE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

As He taught in the open air one morning, under a green tree near one of the Galilean villages, the Autumn heat grew more and more intense, until it came to midday, the hottest time of the day, when, in that country, all work is stopped on account of the heat, and people go into their houses to take a light meal of fruit and bread, which is called dinner, and to rest till the great heat is over. When He ceased teaching, a Pharisee asked Him to dine at his house, but did not ask His disciples, asking instead, a number of his own friends, Pharisees and Lawyers, who were called Scribes.

The house windows were shaded, and small tables were spread with grapes, figs, pomegranates, and other fruits, bread, wine, and water, with couches round them for the guests ; and as they went in, a servant offered them water in a red clay jar, with a basin and a towel, and the Pharisees' friends all washed their hands with much show and in a particular way, before going in to take food. Jesus watched them, but declined the water, and went in to the dinner intentionally without washing His hands, and when the guests saw Him taking the fruit and bread, they all pretended to be very much shocked, for it was one of the little rules of the Pharisees that no one should touch food until he had washed his hands, and they said they would rather starve than break that rule. And the Pharisee who had invited Jesus looked round upon his friends, as much as to say, "I am very much shocked to see the conduct of this young man !" and they whispered together, and looked at Jesus, and nodded to each other. Now, Jesus was angry and indignant, for He knew that many of them were false men, who did wicked things in private, though they made much show of being good.

"You Pharisees !" He exclaimed, when He saw their sneering looks, "you clean the outside of the cup and plate, but inside you are full of wickedness. You fools! for did not

God make both the outside and the inside. Woe to you ! for you are very careful about paying taxes on mint and rue, and such like small garden herbs, as a matter of religion, but you forget all about judgment, and the love of God. Woe to you ! for you like the best seats in churches, and to be bowed to in the markets. But you are like hidden graves, on which the grass grows green, and over which men walk, and do not know that they are on graves." Thus He told them that beneath all their long robes, solemn faces, hand-washings, and fine words, they were cruel and wicked men. But a Lawyer, thinking he would help his friends, exclaimed—

"Teacher, in speaking thus, Thou speakest against the Lawyers also." He had some idea that the Lawyers, or Scribes, as they were called, who kept the religious books and who were the learned doctors of the Law and Teachers of the people, were better than the Pharisees, but in reply to him, Jesus answered—

"Woe ! to you Lawyers also, for you load the people with heavy burdens, and you yourselves do not touch these burdens with your little finger"—meaning that they made countless rules for the people, but did not keep them themselves ; and after telling them that they had in bygone years killed and punished good men, he ended with these stinging words, "Woe ! to you Lawyers, for you have taken away the key of knowledge, and go not in, and they that would go in, you hinder"—meaning that they kept the truth from the people, and taught them wrongly, neither showing them the way to have Heaven, nor walking in it themselves.

This outburst of Jesus caused great confusion among the Pharisee's friends. They had brought Him away from His disciples and followers, to watch Him by themselves, but instead of being overawed or afraid of them, He had denounced the Pharisees as hypocrites and the Lawyers as false Teachers, in the strongest language He had yet used against them. They contradicted Him hotly, saying that He had insulted them, and tried in loud voices to dispute and wrangle with Him, but He rose from the table to leave the house.

Seeing this, the Pharisees and Lawyers rose also and pressed vehemently upon Him, and when His friends saw Him coming out of the Pharisee's house, He was followed by a number of angry men who threatened Him, trying to provoke Him to reply hastily, but while their faces were distorted with anger, His was calm and firm as He walked towards His disciples, who with their friends were waiting for Him outside. But the Pharisees followed Him along the road, till He reached His disciples, still shouting questions and demanding answers, and the people gathered round Him, attracted by the noise of angry voices; but He walked on in silence towards a convenient place, where He could speak to the crowd.

Do thou remember that everything which is done as an outward sign of goodness like the ceremony of washing of hands, may be done by wicked men, and cannot therefore be any proof of real goodness.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN.

GALILEAN VILLAGE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

Hitherto some of the Pharisees had been curious about the teaching of Jesus, and not unfriendly towards Him; but now He had shown how impossible it was for Him to have anything to do with these Teachers and leaders of the people by openly denouncing them in stinging words as false guides. Henceforth they were to be His constant and bitter enemies. Noticeable by His white tunic, as He sat in the shadow on that sunny afternoon in the midst of the crowd that had gathered round Him, Jesus began to speak of what had happened when He was alone in the Pharisee's house. His enemies hoped He would answer their taunts and gibes, but He passed them by, and speaking to His disciples, who had seen their rage, He said—

“Beware of the influence of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, for there is nothing hid that shall not be seen. What hath been said in darkness shall be told in the light, and what

you have whispered into the ear in the inner room shall be told upon the house-top. My friends, do not be afraid of those who can kill you, and after that, have nothing more which they can do ; but I will warn you whom to fear, fear God." And again He told the people never to speak against the Holy Spirit of God ; adding that when they were in any difficulty His Holy Spirit would guide them ; and many good men have found the truth of His words.

But a young man in the crowd, whose father had died leaving some property, came forward and put a question to Jesus,—a common thing for the people to do with their Teachers. He had quarrelled with his brother about the division of the property, and he hoped to get Jesus on his side against his brother.

"Tell my brother," he said, "to divide with me what my father hath left." Now, Jesus always refused to take up people's quarrels, and He saw that the man was greedy.

"Man," he replied sternly, "who hath made me a judge or a divider among you?" The man, thus rebuked, slipped back into the crowd, but all had seen his mean nature, interrupting the teaching of Jesus with his own personal money-quarrel ; and Jesus proceeded to warn the people against the foolish meanness of envying their neighbours' things.

"Beware," He said, "of wishing to have the things which belong to some one else, *for success in life doth not consist in the number of things which a man hath.*" And to show more plainly how foolish it is to spend one's life in gathering wealth, He told them a story with a meaning, about a rich man who did so, a story which in these times of dishonesty in business, should be more thought of ; and this is the story :—

The fields, vineyards, and gardens of a rich man had much fruit, and he said to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have not large enough stores for all my fruits. I will do this : I will take down my barns and build larger ones, and will store in them all my corn and my goods ; and will say to myself, Thou hast plenty of goods stored up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' Now, my child, thou

must not think that this was a good man, for goodness does not consist in providing for our own happiness alone, but we should think of the happiness of others ; while the rich man only heaped up comforts for himself. But Jesus continued—

“And God said, Thou foolish man, this night thou shalt die, and whose then shall these things be, which thou hast stored up for thyself?” The morning came, and the rich man was no more seen among his barns and fields, and strangers came and divided among them the riches which he would not share with them while he lived.

“It is the same,” said Jesus, “with those who gather together wealth for themselves, and do not think about God.” And the people who listened understood Him well, for in many places the harvest had been carried away to the barns, and the purple grapes and ripe fruits were being plucked and shaken down. They liked Him to teach them in such stories, and after this He taught them more by short stories than in any other way.

When thou art older and engaged in business, thou wilt be apt to think that the main thing in life is to gather money, but thou wilt find that thy happiness depends more on goodness and contentment than on money. Remember, then, to wait upon the Holy Spirit of God, and let not thy aim in life be to gather much wealth, but rather by kind, generous, and good deeds, to lay up what Jesus loved to call, Treasures in Heaven.

WISE AND FOOLISH SERVANTS.

GALILEAN VILLAGE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

Sitting outside the Galilean village, on that hot Autumn day, in the shade of one of these evergreen oak trees whose low spreading branches cover a wide circle of ground, Jesus told the people some more short stories, to which they listened with great interest. The principal one was about *Servants*, and as there were many men from the fields, farms, gardens, and sheepfolds there, with their bright kerchiefs of

different colours shading their dark earnest faces, they understood Him easily when He said—

“Be like good servants, who with their tunics fastened up and lamps lighted, are ready waiting in the night-time for their master, who is out at a marriage supper, so that when he knocketh at the door they may open at once to him. Happy are the servants whom he shall find watching, for he will put off his cloak, and make them sit down, and serve them himself with food ; Blessed are they if their master should come in the middle of the night or at the early morning and find them still watching.” And He added these warning words, “Be ye also ready, for I shall come at a time when you do not expect Me.” In the pause which followed this story, Peter, who was already taking his place as the chief disciple, asked—

“Master, is this story spoken only to us, Thy disciples, or to all the people also?” Jesus did not answer Peter directly, but went on to tell another story about servants, which showed that He was speaking to all the people who stood round about Him in the shade and sunshine ; but especially to the disciples whom He had set over His other followers, saying—

“Blessed is the faithful and wise chief servant who has been left in charge of his master’s house and servants, and whom his master findeth doing his duty when he returneth, for he will set him over everything he hath. But if that servant should say to himself, ‘My master is long in returning,’ and should begin to strike the other servants, and to feast and be drunken, his master will come when he doth not expect him, and will scourge him and put him away. Every servant who knoweth his master’s wishes and disobeyeth them, shall be punished with many strokes ; but the servant who doth not know his master’s wishes, and yet doeth things deserving punishment, shall be punished with few strokes ; for to whom much is given, from him shall much be expected.” By this Jesus meant that more good is expected from clever and powerful people than from

ignorant and weak ones. The little child who does not intend to be bad, will not be punished so much as the child who doeth wrong knowing all the time that he is doing wrong. Turning from His disciples to the listening crowd, Jesus told them that they who followed Him must not expect peace, but rather trouble, even from their own dearest friends.

"Do not think," He said, "that I have come to give peace to the world, but rather division; for fathers will turn against sons for following me, and mothers against their daughters." But He told them also that they were not to be discouraged, and looking towards the Pharisees, who stood apart by themselves, He said that, clever as they were, yet they could not see that their power was coming to an end.

"When you see a cloud rising in the Western skies," He said, "you say there will be rain, and you are right. And when you feel a South wind blowing, you say there will be great heat, and you are right. You hypocrites! you understand the signs of coming things in the earth and sky, but how is it that you do not understand the signs of the times?" He then compared the punishment of wickedness to the punishment of law-breakers in a court of justice, saying, "If thou hast a dispute, and art going with the public accuser before a judge, try to settle with the accuser by the way, lest he take thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer put thee into prison, out of which thou shalt not come till thou hast paid thy very last farthing." With this warning He ended His teaching at this place, and as it was near the end of His journey through the villages of Galilee, He walked on, perhaps in the cool of that afternoon, towards the Lake-side again, which was not far off.

Do thou remember the faithful servant doing his duty all the same whether his master seeth him or no; for thou art a little servant of Jesus, and in play or at work thou must ever try to do as He wisheth thee.

THE SOWER.

LAKE-SIDE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

Jesus was again in Capernaum, living in Peter's house by the side of the beautiful Lake. It was Autumn, and the fields of Gennesaret were cleared of their yellow crops, and the clustering grapes and golden oranges hung ripe in the sunshine, by the side of the blue waves that sparkled upon the white beach of shells and pebbles.

He loved to teach at this spot, and as He sat by the water in the cool early morning, telling the people about Heaven and God, the crowd became so great that again He had to go into a fishing-boat, and speak from it. See Him as He stands in His white tunic in the bow of the swaying boat! The crowd, with their blue and brown cloaks and bright kerchiefs, covering the beach, the rocks, the grass, and many standing with bare feet in the warm clear water itself, for He speaks as He never spoke before, in a manner new to Him, but common to the other Teachers, telling them short stories with a meaning, which are called parables; about fields and trees, thorns, flowers, birds, nets, pearls, and many other things.

Thou hast seen horses dragging a plough up and down a field, while the shining share turns over the brown earth—the farmer is preparing his field for the seed,—and the first story Jesus told was about sowing seed. It was the time of year for sowing Winter wheat in the warm plain of Gennesaret that stretched along the Western side of the Lake, and as He spoke, the figure of a sower was perhaps seen in the distance walking over his field of red earth, scattering wheat from a white sheet tied round his neck, while the black crows wheeled in hundreds over his head.

“See!” said Jesus, pointing to the distant fields, “A sower went out from his house to sow, and it happened that as he sowed, some seed fell on the hard footpath that led through the field, and the birds came down and pecked it up; and some seed fell on rocky ground, where it had not much

earth, and it sprang up soon because it had no depth of earth, but when the sun grew hot in Summer it was scorched, and withered away, because it had no root; and some seed fell among young thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it, and it had no fruit; but some fell upon good ground, and it grew up, increasing and having fruit, some more and some less." Thou canst see this field! It has a hedge round about it, and at the foot of the hedge is the place where the prickly briars spring up; in the upper corner of the field, black rocks are sticking through the poor shallow earth, while the rest of the field is red with deep rich soil; through it there is a footpath, sun-dried, trodden hard, and as the sower scatters his wheat, hundreds of black crows are watching him, wheeling and crossing in the air over his head, and alighting down behind him.

But the disciples and their friends did not catch the meaning of this story, and this is how Jesus explained it to them in Peter's house that afternoon.

"Do you not understand this story?" He asked. "How then will you understand other stories?" Then He told them, that while they would understand it, many other people would not, adding, "Blessed are your eyes and ears, for they shall see and hear things which many good men have wished to know. This is the meaning of the story of the sower. My words are like the seed. When any one heareth My words and understandeth them not, then cometh the spirit of evil and taketh away that which he had received, and that is what I mean by the seed sown on the footpath, which the crows carried away. When any one heareth My words and at once receiveth them with joy, and believeth them for a while, but having no hold of them cannot withstand a time of temptation—that is what I mean by the seed sown upon rocky places, which the sun scorched. When any one having heard My words, goeth away and My words are choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to perfection; that is what I mean by the seed which fell among thorns that grew up and choked it. And what I mean by the seed that

fell into good ground, are people who with an honest and good heart, having heard My words, hold them safely and bring forth fruit with patience."

How simple now is the lesson! The crowd of people on that sunny beach were the field, Jesus was the Sower who was spreading the seeds of Heaven among men. Some of His words fell on cold, hard minds, some on shallow, emotional minds, some on vain and worldly ones that liked His teaching and resolved to follow it, but whose good resolutions faded away when they went back to their business and their pleasures. But there were good and honest minds in that crowd too, who kept the words of Jesus and tried to be like Him.

Remember, then, that the best ground for the words of Jesus to grow in is an honest, good, and gentle heart, such an heart as any little child may have; and what child would not like to have the words of Jesus kept safely in his memory, to bear precious fruit in his life?

THE ANGEL-REAPERS.

LAKE-SIDE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

The second short story which Jesus told the people as He sat in the boat that floated by the white beach on that sunny Autumn morning was about "*The Lamp of Light*." He told them that it was like a good person whose beautiful life shed a bright influence all around him.

"When a man hath lit a lamp," He said, "he doth not put a cover over it, but placeth it on a stand that all who come into the house may see." The people were thus not to believe in Jesus and then hide their belief from everybody, but were rather to show it and make it known, and He warned them against thinking they could hide their thoughts from God. "There is nothing hidden that shall not be seen," He continued, "and nothing secret that shall not be known. If you measure justly to others, just measure shall be given back to you. To him that hath, shall more be given, and from him that hath not, shall be taken even the little which he seemeth

to have"—meaning that they who had the light of His Spirit within them, and who showed it, would receive more of His Spirit, while they who hid it would have the little taken away which they had : therefore, let thy little light shine, and more light will be given thee.

The stories which Jesus told them next on that hot Autumn day were about God, His Kingdom of Heaven, and His own teaching. It is not likely that He told them one after another, but rather at different times of the day. The story about "*The Tares and the Wheat*" is again about a farmer who sowed wheat, and of a troublesome weed called the darnel weed, which all the people knew.

"My teaching to-day," Jesus said, "is like a farmer who sowed good wheat in his field, but an enemy came in the night time and sowed tares among the wheat and went away. And when the wheat sprang up with the green blade and the ear, the tares grew up also, and the farmer's servants came and said, 'Master, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? where have the tares come from?' To which he replied, 'Mine enemy hath done this thing.' Then the servants asked him if they should not go and pull up the tares, but he said, 'Nay! lest while you pull up the tares you root up the wheat with them. Let them both grow together until the harvest time, and then I will tell my reapers to gather the tares up first and tie them into bundles and burn them, and then to gather the wheat into my barns.'" Now a tare, or darnel-weed, is very difficult to tell from poor wheat until fully grown, and it is poisonous and fit to spoil any crop, and the country people knew well how they gathered the weeds and thorns into heaps in their fields and burnt them up to get rid of them. In this story the words of Jesus again are the seed of Heaven ; but the people did not rightly understand what He meant until later on, when His disciple asked Him to explain it, and this is what He said—

"The world is the field, and My words are the seed of Heaven among men. The people who follow after goodness, are the wheat, while they who follow wickedness are the tares,

and the enemy that soweth the tares is the spirit of evil ; the harvest is the end of the world, and the angels are the reapers. As the tares in the story were gathered up and burned, so shall it be with the wicked, for I will send My angels and they shall gather the wicked out of the world, and all things that cause wickedness, and cast them into fire. And the righteous shall shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father in Heaven."

Whether wilt thou, my child, be among the wheat in this Kingdom, with a fruitful head of bending gold, or among the tares, holding up a poor, deceitful stalk ? In this story Jesus speaks of death as His gentle beautiful angels, reaping the golden fields of the world, and bearing His children home ; and the poet Longfellow, a true lover of children, has also spoken of this reaper, Death, as an angel, and of little children as flowers, in a beautiful poem which thou shouldst learn, for it is perhaps the gentlest picture of death in English poetry, and he says this—

" Oh ! not in cruelty, not in wrath
The Reaper came that day,
'Twas an Angel visited the green earth
And took the flowers away."

THE GREEN BLADE AND THE EAR.

LAKE-SIDE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

The next story which Jesus told the people that day was about how the seed grows. Wheat is sown in the late Autumn, and lies in the earth during all the Wintry snows ; but see the field in Spring, under white clouds and a blue sky, when the days are of sunshine and rain. It seems all brown earth, but if thou wert to turn over a few lumps, thou wouldst see little white points shooting up ; a few days, and they are through the ground, tinged with green ; a few days more, and the field is covered with their soft spikes, giving quite a green shadow to it ; a few weeks, and these spikes open into emerald sheaths, that quite hide the old brown earth ; a few more weeks and it

is Summer, with green blades rising into spear stalks, throwing out gracefully bending leaves, each stalk crowned with an ear of wheat that grows thicker as the grain swells ; in Autumn the stalks are as tall as thyself, dry and rustling in the sunny wind, heavy with grain, till the reapers come and bear away the golden harvest to the barn. That is how wheat grows, and this is the story of "*The Green Blade and the Ear.*"

"My words to-day," said Jesus, "are spreading the Kingdom of Heaven among men, just as if a farmer were to sow seed in the earth, and go away for months, and the seed should grow and spring up, he knoweth not how, growing of itself, first the green blade, then the ear, then the full wheat in the ear ; and when it is ripe, he should come and reap the yellow grain with his sickle, for the harvest is ready." Thus Jesus scattered His words like the seed of Heaven, which, falling into honest hearts, would spring up a harvest of good thoughts and deeds, in His Kingdom in the world.

The next story He told them is called "*The Grain of Mustard Seed,*" and is also about sowing, and how His Kingdom would spread among men. Thou hast seen the wild mustard among the corn with its small yellow flower growing so close and thick that for days the whole field is of buttercup yellow. But in that country the wild mustard grows to the size of a little tree, although its seed is as small as a pin's head.

"The growth of the Kingdom of Heaven," said Jesus, "is like a grain of mustard seed which a man sowed in his garden, and, although it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it groweth up it becometh a tree spreading out large branches, so that the birds can sit in its shade." Little children sometimes think they are too small to do any good thing ; but if the Spirit of Jesus, like the little mustard-seed, be dropped into the garden of their heart, it will grow until it fills the little heart with Heaven.

The people in that country baked their own bread, and the next story Jesus told them as they stood by the side of the beautiful Lake was about the "*Leaven*" with which they

baked their bread. He knew that women ground the wheat into flour between two small millstones, and He had often, when a boy, seen His mother putting leaven into the flour and letting it stand covered up for some hours that it might bake rightly. But what is this leaven which the dark women of that country hid among their flour? In England it is called "yeast," and the strange thing about it is that if only a little is put in among a heap of flour it will infect the flour with its own nature until the whole of the flour is leavened.

"The power of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world," said Jesus, "is like leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal, until the whole of the meal was leavened." And if the words of Jesus are hidden in thy heart, they will change thy little heart until it becometh like His, a holy temple for God to dwell in. Now, this was the last of the stories about His Kingdom among men, which Jesus told the people from the boat; and standing up He bade them go away home, and they went away, some along the road by the Lake towards the towns, some up the green glens to the hills. And the disciples came into the boat, and as they rowed away towards Capernaum the setting sun cast the shadows of the hills upon a calm Lake of deeper blue, while in the silence, broken only by the dripping oars, Jesus explained to His disciples what He had said to the people, for He had spoken in stories all that day: but the story of "*The Sower*" He did not explain till they got home to Peter's house. There he told them more stories, all about His words and the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, the first of which stories is called "*The Treasure in the Field*," and it is about what a man did who found gold in a field.

"The Kingdom of Heaven," Jesus said, "is like a treasure which a man found buried in a field, and he was so glad that he sold everything he had and bought that field." By this Jesus meant that they were to do all in their power to have Heaven. But thou knowest that gold cannot buy it, but that if thou dost ask God, He will give thee this treasure of Heaven in the little field of thine own heart.

Merchants in that country rode long distances on camels to buy precious things—jewels, spices, silks, rare woods, and dyes,—and some were pearl merchants, who bought pearls from men, who dived to the bottom of the sea for them. Now a pearl is round as a pea, of a greyish-white colour, beautifully smooth and lustrous, and they are found in shells, and are much thought of as beautiful gems. And the next story Jesus told was about "*The Pearl of Great Price.*"

"The Kingdom of Heaven," He said, "is like a pearl merchant, who having found one pearl of great price, sold everything he had and bought the pearl." Thus Jesus showed them that Heaven is above all things to be wished for. And the words of Jesus! what beautiful pearls! what strings of pearls they are! When people give so much for jewel-pearls, which they may lose or break, how much more should they wish to have the words of Jesus? See thou that having got them thou dost keep them safe, that they get not dull, lost, or forgotten, but are ever bright in thy memory.

The next story Jesus told in the house is about "*The Fishing-Net,*" and as Peter and most of His disciples were fishermen, and fishing-boats could be seen on the Lake from the cottage door, they easily understood Him. Hast thou ever seen a fishing net? It is made of brown twine knotted into squares that thou couldst not get thy small hand through, yet the net could hold twenty children such as thee, and it is let out between two boats, and hangs down in the water, and the fish swimming along, run their heads into the little squares, where they stick fast, and are found when the net is pulled up, some shining like silver, some dull as lead, some with the colours of the rainbow.

"The Kingdom of Heaven," said Jesus, "is like a net that men cast into the lake, that caught fish of every kind, and when it was full, the fishermen drew it in to the shore, and sitting down gathered the good fish into dishes, but the bad fish they threw away. And so shall it be in the end of the world, when the angels shall come to separate the good people from the bad." Jesus had now told His last story to the

disciples, and had explained the others which He told the people from the boat, and had answered all the disciples' questions.

"Have you understood all these things?" He asked them.

"Yes," they replied; and so ended all the beautiful stories of that remarkable day—stories with a meaning.

And thou wilt not forget that the words of Jesus are precious seed to thee, precious in that they are His Spirit which will give thee that Heaven for which all men seek.

BIRDS OF THE AIR HAVE NESTS.

LAKE-SIDE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

Evening was now approaching, but the people who had followed Jesus would not go away from the door of Peter's cottage, and as most of the villages were on that side of the Lake, the crowd was large; but across the Lake was the wild rocky country of Gadara, and His friends advised Him to go over to the other side that night if He wished to have rest and quiet. So Jesus gave orders to get ready the large boat, and the news spread among the people that He was about to leave them, and while some begged Him to stay, others went to get boats and sail across with Him. Walking from the house to the beach, He was just about to enter the boat, when a rich Lawyer, a Teacher of the people, who had greatly liked what Jesus had been saying, came forward to Him.

"Master!" he said, "I will follow Thee wherever Thou goest." But Jesus replied in these tired words—

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but I have not a place whereon to lay My head." We know not whether the rich man went with Jesus. To another man in the crowd, that pressed round Him, Jesus spoke those old impressive words which He first used to His disciple Philip—

"Follow Me!" but the man wished to wait a little.

"Master, let me first bury my father," he said. But Jesus would not let him go.

"Follow Me!" He said again. "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and tell My words to others." I do not know what Jesus meant by these words about the dead, but He certainly did not mean that a man should not bury his father. Perhaps the man's answer was only an excuse, for Jesus did not think it a sufficient reason. Hearing what had been said, another man came forward and exclaimed—

"I will follow Thee, Master, but first let me bid farewell to my friends at home." But Jesus would not let him go either, for He knew that the man might never return if he went back among his friends, and He took him into the boat, saying—

"No one who putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is fit for Heaven." Thou knowest how a ploughman, when he ploughs, keeps his eye fixed on what is before him, so any one who follows Jesus must not go unwillingly if he would be a true follower.

But this farewell-taking at the water's edge was too slow for Peter and the disciples, for the sun was going down amid lurid clouds, and they feared a storm, and with gentle urgency they took Jesus as He was, and hurried Him into the boat. Counting disciples and the sailors who were to bring the boat back, there would be about twenty men in it, most of them fishermen, accustomed to sail in all kinds of weather. The anchor was pulled up and taken in over the bow, and the huge peaked brown sail was swung up from the mast, and as the wind filled it and the boat began to glide through the water, Peter grasped the tiller, and they were soon sailing away from the shore and the people. And the men who had launched little boats came after them. The sun went down amid wild fiery clouds, throwing a red glare upon their high sail, darkness came suddenly over the hills, without starlight, and they had six miles to go, for they were crossing at the broadest part of the Lake.

Tired with His day's work, wrapping His thick blue cloak about Him, Jesus lay down in the stern of the boat and was soon asleep; and some one put the steersman's leather cushion under His head, and He lay sleeping soundly on

His hard bed amid all the noise of wind and waves and creaking rigging. Sitting on the raised steersman's seat, Peter's brown weatherbeaten face was grave and even stern, as he grasped the rope of the large sail with one hand, and the tiller with the other, now looking up at the huge bulging canvas, as a gust of wind bent the boat's edge down to the hissing water, and now stooping down and gazing steadily under the sail into the darkness ahead, and again looking at the chasing clouds in the sky to windward. He was anxious, but Jesus, rocked by the boat, slept on, with His head close to Peter. The wind shifted and blew unsteadily, and the boat's course had to be altered several times in the dark, with rattling ropes and flapping sail, and the waves rose, but the boat bounded over them, and still Jesus slept.

The weather had changed, the wind blew in wild gusts, and Peter was doubly watchful, for the voyage would be longer than they had intended. "What is that?" some one exclaimed, as they listened to a distant hissing sound. They knew what was coming; one of those sudden storms from the Eastern hills that are common on that Lake, and scarcely had the boat's head been put round to meet the storm, and the sail brought rattling down and secured, than the wind struck them, driving the boat before it with bare mast, the gale increasing every instant. Oars were put out to steady them, with two men to each oar, while the increasing waves, rolling up behind, went hissing and heaving under them, and as the boat rose and fell their whole skill was needed to keep the water from coming in. They were now alone on the dark stormy Lake, for the little boats had all gone back when they saw the weather changing; but although the boat was rocking and pitching wildly, Jesus slept on. The wind increased still more, and waves began to strike them and leap in, wetting the disciples; but they did not mind that, so long as the boat floated well; but the waves grew so high and dangerous, that, fishermen as they were, they began to be afraid. It was an open boat, and if one of these great waves should break over them it would sink them, and they held to their seats in

silence, till at length a wave larger than the rest hit the boat and poured in, and it began to fill with water, and thinking they were lost, some one cried in terror to Jesus—

“Master, Master, we are sinking!” Their cries awoke Him, although the wind did not, and Jesus rose and faced the storm suddenly and for the first time, the wind beating on Him and the spray smiting His face, while the boat heaved and tossed under His feet. Looking out upon the dark waters, He rebuked the wind, and said to the waves—

“Peace, be still.” His voice was scarce heard by His terrified disciples ; but there came a great calm, for storms on that Lake pass away almost as suddenly as they come, and the disciples were filled with amazement as great as lately had been their fear, and in the silence they heard Jesus asking them—

“Why are you afraid? Do you not yet trust Me?” They did not speak. They were afraid of Him, afraid of His power, afraid of His look, afraid of what He had said, for they did not yet believe that their own Countryman was the Son of God. Oars were put out again, and as the men rowed towards the shore of Gadara, the wind having driven them to the Southern end of the Lake, the sailors said to each other in whispers—

“Who is this that commandeth the wind and the waves, and they obey Him?” Peter knew, as he sat with his hand on the tiller ; but no one answered.

Remember, then, that in the darkest hour and amid the wildest danger, there is One, Jesus, who, if thou dost call on Him, will calm thy fears and give thee strength.

LEGION AND THE SWINE.

GADARA, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

When the sun rose next morning over the Hills of Bashan, all was calm and beautiful upon the Lake, with the blue sky and white clouds reflected on its breast, and no one could have told that in the night a storm had been raging there. Peter's boat was rocking at anchor in a little gravelly creek of

a river close to the shore at Gadara, where, excepting for a green strip of grass and bushes near the beach, all was wild and rocky, rising into high flat mountains, with no houses near the Lake. Roaming among the dry grass and stones were droves of swine, in charge of swineherds, brought to this lonely place to feed on the wild roots, for the Jews would not allow them to be near their villages, nor would they eat or touch ham or bacon. Tombs also were there, dark caves in the limestone rock of the hills, in which people were buried. But there was something even more dreadful. A maniac lived among these tombs, who wandered among the mountain gorges and the caves by day and night, uttering strange cries, and cutting himself with sharp stones, for he had torn his clothes to pieces and was naked ; and the people were afraid to pass that way. He had been caught once or twice and bound, but he was so strong that he had broken his bonds, and fled back to these caves by the lonely shore, and no person could tame him ; and his name was Legion.

When Jesus, and those who were with Him, landed from the boat, Legion came out from a cave, looking wildly at them through his tangled hair ; but when he saw Jesus, he ran over the grass and down the stony beach with his bare feet, and lying down before Jesus, worshipped Him. Jesus was not afraid of him, and had pity on his dreadful state ; but Legion, with his face to the ground, shrieked—

“What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most High God. I beg you, by God, torment me not.”

“What is thy name?” Jesus asked gently.

“My name is ‘Legion,’ for we are many,” he cried.—Now Legion means six thousand.—And he begged Jesus not to send the trouble that was in him into the place of evil spirits.

“Send us to the swine,” he cried, “that we may go into them.”

“Come out, thou wicked spirit, out of the man!” Jesus replied.

Now there was a herd of about two thousand swine feeding near by upon rising ground, that sloped quickly down to the water, which is deep close to the shore at that place, and when

Jesus spoke, Legion's madness entered the swine, and they rushed wildly down the slope into the Lake and were drowned. The swineherds were astonished, for they saw no cause for this, and fled away to their masters in the town of Gadara, among the hills, spreading the news as they went, that a fishing-boat had come to the shore in the night time, that Legion had run to meet the people, and that the swine were drowned. The people of Gadara were alarmed, and, guided by the swineherds, they came down to the Lake in numbers to see what had taken place, and found the strangers and Legion still there. Some one had given Legion a cloak, and there he sat at the feet of the young white-robed Stranger, the terror of the tombs, clothed, and in his right mind, with his tangled hair swept back from his face, and the people were afraid when they saw where the swine were drowned, and heard how Legion had been healed; and soon more people came down to the Lake from the country round about. Had this wonderful Stranger come to punish them for keeping swine? They were afraid to touch Jesus. He might destroy them; and they begged Him to come no further, but as a favour to go back into the boat and leave their shore. Jesus did not reply, but ordered the boat to be made ready. There was one whose heart sank within him at this—Legion. Now, calm and earnest, he followed Jesus to the water's edge, and begged to be taken with them. But Jesus had another use for him, to stay and be His Teacher among those darkened Gadarenes who would not receive Him, and He said kindly to Legion—

“Return to thy home and thy friends, and tell them what great things God hath done for thee, and how He hath had mercy on thee.” Legion was satisfied, and the people stood sullenly on the shore watching the boat being pushed out from the creek into the Lake, and the brown sail hoisted; how different from the people who bade Jesus farewell upon the other side the evening before! And so the Gadarenes preferred undisturbed swine-feeding to the words of Jesus, of whom stories had been wafted to them across the Lake. But

Legion went about in Gadara and the other nine towns of the Decapolis in the country East of the Lake telling what Jesus had done for him, and as people listened to the sensible reasoning of the man who was once a terrible maniac, some believed that only the power of God in Jesus could have made this change in him.

Remember, then, how these foolish Gadarenes stopped Jesus on the very edge of their country. Are there no little boys or girls who are at present refusing to let the Spirit of Jesus enter their hearts? Be not thou one of those dark little Gadarenes.

THE RULER'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.

CAPERNAUM, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

With the morning sun sparkling on the blue water of the Lake, and lighting up their peaked red sail, Jesus and His disciples sailed away from the shore of Gadara and the crowd of sullen people standing there, away towards Capernaum at the other end of the Lake, passing the towns of Tiberias, Magdala, and many others, and sailing under the towering cliffs of weather-beaten rock that rose from the water's edge near the bay of Capernaum; and after some hours they neared the harbour and quays of that town. The storm of last night had made His friends anxious for His safety, and when Peter's boat was recognized returning, they came down to the water to meet Him, until there was a crowd waiting; and when the huge sail was pulled down, and the boat glided alongside the quay, the people welcomed Him back gladly. But a well-known person was seen pressing through the crowd, Jairus, one of the chief men of their church and town, and the people made way for him, for there was a look of distress in his face. Perhaps his little daughter was worse? To their surprise, when Jairus came up to Jesus, the great man bowed down before Him, like one of the poorest of the people, and said—

“My little daughter is dying. I pray Thee, come and put Thine hand upon her, that she may live.” He knew of Jesus having healed the nobleman's servant, for he was one of the

elders of the town who asked Him to do it. Jesus left the landing place and went away with Jairus towards his fine house, which was outside the town, His disciples and the people following; and as they went, they were delayed by the constantly increasing crowd who pressed round about them. Now, in that crowd there was a poor woman, weak with illness, who by hard struggling had got close behind Jesus, and she thought if she might only touch His cloak she would be healed. So when the people were pushing to and fro, and no one was looking, she touched the blue and white fringe of His outer cloak, which was thought by good people to be a very important part of the dress, and immediately she hid herself among the crowd, for she felt she was healed. But Jesus stopped, and turning round, said to the people near Him—

“Who touched Me?” for He knew that some one had touched Him. But everybody denied having done so.

“Master!” said Peter, “the people press Thee, and crush Thee on every side, and yet thou dost ask, ‘Who touched Me?’” Peter thought the question a very strange one.

“But,” said Jesus, “some one touched Me, for I know that power hath gone out from Me,” and He continued to wait for some one to speak. Then the poor woman saw that she could not hide herself, and trembling from head to foot, pressed forward through the people, and kneeling down on the dusty road before Him, exclaimed—

“I touched Thee, and am healed. I have been ill twelve years, and have suffered much from many doctors, who made me no better, but rather worse; and hearing of Thee, I thought that if I might but touch the fringe of Thy cloak, I should be healed. So I came behind Thee and touched the fringe, and am healed.” She was but a poor, modest woman, afraid to tell Jesus of her trouble, and she remained kneeling before Him. Could He be angry with her?

“Daughter,” He said gently, “be comforted, thy trust hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be healed of thy trouble!” And the woman rose, and followed Him with the rest of the people, as He turned and walked on again.

Jairus had been standing by all this time, sorry for the woman, yet afraid of the delay, because it might make them too late to save his little daughter's life, and they had not gone far until he saw one of his house servants running to meet them, and pushing through the crowd the servant gave him this message which stabbed him to the heart—

“Do not trouble the Master any more. Thy daughter is dead.” With a face of grief, Jairus looked to Jesus, who had also heard the message.

“Do not fear,” Jesus said. “Only believe, and she shall be made well.” The people heard the words, and wondered. Was this young Carpenter going to restore his little daughter to life? When they reached Jairus's fine house, with its bright garden round it, and thick green trees to keep it cool, they heard the doleful sound of flutes being blown, that told all who passed by, that the Ruler's little daughter was dead. The door stood wide open, and the house was already full of friends, who were sitting on the floor, the seats having been all turned upside down, the men with clothes torn, the women with loosened hair and dust on their heads, rocking their bodies to and fro, weeping and mourning with the mother, who was in great distress. Jesus was displeased with this throng of people and the noise they were making, and as He went in He said to them—

“Why do you weep and make a noise? The child is not dead, but sleepeth,”—meaning that she would live again, for He loved to call death “sleep.” But those who had come to hold a mourning, laughed mockingly at Jesus, showing by their horrid laughter how little real grief they felt. Jesus then told Jairus to put out all these sham mourners, and leave only himself, his wife, and Peter, James, and John in the quiet house with Him; and the people outside were most curious to know what was going to happen. The child was lying in her own little shaded room, richly furnished with coloured rugs on the floor, and delicate curtains drawn round the small bed, where she lay silent and still, with eyes shut,—she was only twelve years old. Taking her father and mother with Him,

Jesus went into the little room, and standing by her bed, looked at the little girl as she lay quiet and beautiful, and taking her hand, said—

“Little maid, I say to thee, Arise!” And her spirit returned, and opening her eyes, she looked at them and rose up, and her mother took her in her arms and kissed her. I know not what the little girl said to Jesus, but she would ask what had been the matter with her, and who the strangers were, and what meant the voices of the crowd of people outside the house. It is likely that Jesus and His disciples would partake of food in Jairus’s house ; and before leaving, Jesus reminded him that they should also give the little girl something to eat, and told them earnestly that they were not to tell the people what He had done, as He did not wish such things to be talked about, and He went away to walk back again to the town. But friends who had seen the little girl lying, and had mourned for her death, and who saw her going about again, told others what had happened, and it soon became known and talked about in the villages.

Thou wilt remember that this little girl owed her life to Jesus, and that she would love Him ever after ; and there are many little girls and boys who have got true and kind hearts from Him, and who must never cease to love and obey Him also.

TWO BLIND BEGGARS.

CAPERNAUM, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

It was the afternoon when Jesus returned by the road from the Ruler’s house into Capernaum, on His way to Peter’s cottage at the side of the Lake, and He was followed by a crowd of people, attracted by all that had happened. Now there were two blind beggars sitting begging by the roadside, and hearing the voices and sound of many feet, they asked what all the stir was about, and were told that Jesus was coming back from Jairus’s house, where He had raised his little daughter to life. “If He can do that, He can heal us,” they thought, for they had heard also of Him healing the

woman on His way out, and they resolved to find Jesus. But how were they to do so in such a crowd? It was a chance not to be lost: one in a lifetime. And they rose to their feet, and by getting into the crowd, and asking questions, they found out that the people were returning to the town, and that Jesus was on before, and as they knew the roads well, they determined to follow with the people and overtake Him. Walking in the middle of the dusty road, holding each other by the arm, that they might not be separated with their sticks to feel the way, jostled on every side, but still keeping their ground, they tramped stoutly and bravely on, shouting with loud, rough voices as they went—

“Thou Son of David, have mercy on us! Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!” But no answer came, and they were often told to be quiet, that Jesus would not trouble with beggars; but they who chid them thus had never been blind, and still they trudged on, knowing Jesus must stop somewhere. Now “David” was the name of a great king, and the beggars had heard that the Christ would be called the “Son of David,” and thought Jesus might listen sooner if they thus praised Him; but Jesus passed through the town, and did not stop till He came to Peter’s house. Feeling their way with hands and sticks, the two beggars at length found the door of the house, and still holding by each other, called lustily in—

“Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.” But getting no reply, they pressed their way in, until, covered with yellow dust, with their rags, their beggars’ wallets, and stout beggars’ staffs, they stood before Jesus, opening wide their poor blank eyes that He might see their state. He had heard their cries.

“Do you believe that I can heal your blindness?” Jesus asked. To which they both replied at once—

“Yes, Master!” They did not waste words, but stood perfectly still. Going to them, He touched their eyes with His hand, saying as He did so—

‘According as you have trusted Me, so let it be done to

you." And immediately they could see, and what they saw was the dark eyes of Jesus looking calmly into theirs, perhaps the first face they had ever seen. And He told them strictly not to tell any person what He had done, for He did not wish the people to follow Him because of His wonders, but to hear His words. But the men could not keep it to themselves. The people had seen them blind and calling upon Jesus, and now they could see, and so they told them what He had done for them, until everybody knew.

In the afternoon, as Jesus was going out again, some persons brought a maniac to Him, another of those poor mad creatures, whom the people, not knowing what was wrong with them, said had an evil spirit, and the man could not speak, and they begged Jesus to heal him, and He did so, and the man's friends went away exclaiming that they had never seen anything like this in all their country before. And some spoke to their old religious Teachers about it, saying that they had never heard of a man having such power before, to which the wicked Pharisees replied by telling the people that the power of Jesus did not come from Heaven, repeating their old falsehood.

"The king of evil spirits," they said, "giveth Him power to cast out evil spirits"—intending the people to believe that Jesus was a wicked person whose power came from the spirit of evil within Him; and many people believed this wickedest of falsehoods.

And thou wilt remember how these blind men did not give up following Jesus, and when thou art doing what is right, let nothing turn thee aside, but ever press forward, trusting in God, who telleth thee what is right to do

THE BROW OF THE HILL.

NAZARETH, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

His mother had asked Jesus to come home and rest, and He resolved to go from Capernaum, where He had been so well received, and visit His friends at Nazareth, where He

had not been for many months, and teach the people there. Starting in the early morning, He walked again with His friends round the beautiful Western shore of the Lake, striking up through the wild, deep valley of Doves, that led to the road over the hills to Nazareth, and as they went through the fruitful country, they saw the pomegranates and apples hanging red upon the trees, and in every vineyard the people were busy plucking the purple and green clusters of ripe grapes, and carrying them away in baskets, to have the sweet juice squeezed from them, for it was now the end of Autumn, the time of the vintage and ripest fruits. It was the afternoon when they descended from the Northern hills into the open valley of Nazareth, which He knew so well, with its broad terraced slopes and swelling hills, whose shapes were so familiar to Him, and the path which wound along the hillside up to the white houses at the top ; and He went to stay at His mother's house with the few disciples who had come with Him.

When Sabbath morning came He went to the village church. It was the largest building in the place, made of the finest stone that could be got, with pillars at the door, and a climbing vine with its leaves and grapes and open flowers carved over it for ornament. Inside it was paved with white stone, and at the further end stood the familiar silver candlestick, which was lighted only upon great occasions, and there hung the mysterious curtain of purple, blue, and white, behind which was the box that held the rolls of the Bible books ; and there, also, was the reader's desk, and there, the highest seat where the Pharisees and Teachers sat, and behind a high latticed screen, was the place where, as a little boy, Jesus had first knelt in church by His mother's side.

His brothers and disciples went with Him to church on this Sabbath, His mother and sisters having to go by themselves by a back way, and the building was crowded, for the villagers had heard of His teaching and wonders, and while many shook their heads wisely, there were some who had not forgotten His gentle life among them. When Jesus came in, the people were not surprised to see the young Carpenter go

forward and take a seat among the chief men of the church, and near to the reader's desk. The morning service of singing, reciting eulogies, creeds, and prayers, with responses from the people went on as usual, until the time came for the reading and teaching, then the clerk went in behind the purple curtain, revealing as he did so, the little lamp which always hung lighted there, and took out a parchment roll from the box, and coming down the steps he handed it to Jesus, which was an invitation to read the portion for that day. Jesus rose, and going up the steps to the reader's desk, which was about the middle of the church, unrolled the parchment book called Isaiah, and read a short portion, containing the words—

“The Spirit of God is upon Me,

“Because He hath appointed Me to bring good tidings to the poor:

“He hath sent Me to tell of freedom to the prisoners,

“And recovering of sight to the blind ;

“To heal them that are bruised,

“And to proclaim the welcome year of the Lord.”

Rolling up the parchment, He gave it back to the clerk, and sat down, at which all the people stood up, as was the custom, and remained standing while He spoke.

“To-day,” Jesus began, “these words which I have read have come true in your hearing”—meaning that He was such a Teacher as Isaiah wrote of seven hundred years before, in these verses ; and He went on to speak as He had done in the other churches in Galilee, while the congregation wondered at His words and manner, for He spoke not like their other religious Teachers, who repeated the sayings of other men, but He spoke with authority, as though He had received a message from God : and when He ended, a murmur of talking arose in the church. The people could scarcely believe their ears, and began to ask each other—

“Is not this The Carpenter, the son of Joseph? Is not His mother called Mary? His brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, and His sisters ; do they not all live here with us? What is the meaning of the wisdom that is given to

this Man, and the wonders which He doeth? How hath He these powers?" They were offended that Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, should return to their village to speak to them as He had done. He heard what they were saying, and knew that the people did not believe Him, because they had known Him before, and when their voices grew quieter, He began to speak again—

"No doubt," He said, "you will ask Me to do the wonders here which you have heard of Me doing in Capernaum; but I tell you, no prophet is honoured in his own country." Now, they all expected Him to work some wonder before them, and show off His power; but He would not do so, and went on teaching, and this the people took as a rebuke, and were annoyed. He told them about the prophet Elijah, written of in the Bible, who came only to a widow of Sarepta, and gave her food when all the people were starving; and of Elisha, another prophet, who, although there were many lepers in the country, healed only Naaman, the Syrian; neither of which persons whom the prophets helped were Jews.

The people, who were anxious to find fault, thought Jesus meant that strangers were to be preferred before them, and flew into a passion that He should speak so to them, and crowding round the reader's raised desk, they caught His white tunic and pulled Him down from the seat, and pushed Him out of the church, and even out of the village. Incited, probably by His enemies the Lawyers and Pharisees, the anger of the people increased with the noise and hustling; and they resolved to punish Jesus, or even kill Him, and shouting, "To the hill! to the hill!" and keeping hold of Him, they led Him round by the back of the village, intending to push Him over a steep cliff in the limestone hill behind. He did not resist them; but when they had led Him up the hill, the people seemed to realize what they were doing. What had He done to deserve death? Something in His calm looks made them afraid to go on, and they took their hands off Him, and none was found to push Him over the cliff. Turning away from those who had held Him, Jesus passed through the

people and went away, no one stopping Him, away down the hillside, away down the old path into the broad valley, away from Nazareth, the village of His boyhood, never to return.

A mob is always cowardly, and Mary's heart was pierced with pain when she saw the people seizing Jesus, hundreds against One. Where were His friends? where His disciples? As the people went away to their homes, they must have felt that, in a fit of passion, they had disgraced their village, and banished the gentlest Life they had ever known. And as Jesus went away, contrasting perhaps, the kindness of the people of Cana, of Capernaum, of Sychar, with the violence of Nazareth, His heart was filled with sorrow for His old companions. Why would they not believe Him? Even some of His own younger brothers doubted Him.

"A prophet," He said, "is never without honour, excepting when he is in his own country, among his own relations, and in his own house." He would gladly have healed the people, as He had done elsewhere, but they did not believe in Him; and except touching a few sick persons, He did no wonders there. We read that afterwards His mother and brothers came to Him at Capernaum. Perhaps they too, had to leave the village where Mary had lived for over forty years.

Remember thou the folly and cruelty of the sudden anger which led these men of Nazareth to seek to kill their old Play-fellow and their best Friend.

THE FIG TREE IN THE VINEYARD.

GALILEAN VILLAGE, AUTUMN, A.D. 32.

Leaving Nazareth, from which He had been banished by His old school-companions, Jesus went with His disciples down into the lower parts of Galilee, and began a third journey through all the villages, teaching and healing. The harvest was over and the fields were bare, some of them ploughed, harrowed, and sown, and many of the vines had

been stripped of their grapes, and the people, being free from their work, followed Him in crowds larger than ever. As He looked at them and thought of their false religious Teachers, He was grieved, and compared them to sheep without shepherds, and turning to His disciples, who were soon to take up the task of teaching, which had grown so great, He said—

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Pray to God, therefore, that He may send out workers into the harvest fields.” With His single voice Jesus had roused Galilee, and He wished the people taught while they were willing to listen. For almost a year His twelve disciples had been going about with Him, learning how to teach, and soon they were to go out and teach also, the first workers to be sent into the harvest field.

At this time a piece of news was in everybody's mind. Some men from Galilee, who had gone to the Festival of Bowers at Jerusalem in October, had joined in a riot against the Romans, and Pilate the Roman governor, had sent soldiers among them, who beat them with clubs, killing some of them, and some who fled into the Temple for safety, had been followed and struck down where they stood preparing sacrifices, so that they bled and died ; and the people were indignant at this outrage in their Great Temple. Wishing to know what Jesus thought of it, some one interrupted His teaching to tell Him what the Roman soldiers had done. It was commonly believed that the men must have been wicked, to have been thus killed while worshipping ; but His answer was unexpected—

“You think that these men of Galilee were more wicked than other men because they were so killed. I tell you no ! but unless you repent of your wickedness you shall all perish in like manner.” To stop their superstitious beliefs, He also spoke of a great stone tower which was then being built at Siloam by men of Judæa, to lead water into Jerusalem, which had fallen, killing eighteen men, and which accident many people believed was the act of God, because

Temple money had been taken by King Herod to pay for the work. But Jesus told them that the men who were killed were not more wicked than they who were listening to Him, and that unless they became good they would be likewise killed. He did not mean that they would all be slain in the Temple, or by a falling tower, but He did mean to warn them to become good. He then told them a story with a meaning, about a fig tree that grew in a garden of vines, to show the patience of God with wicked people, and they listened all the more earnestly because it was then the time of year when the great crop of greenish-yellow figs was ripe, and being shaken from the trees.

“A man planted a fig tree in his vineyard,” He said, “and every year when the Autumn came he looked for figs, but it had none. And he said to his gardener, ‘For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and found none. Cut it down; why should it cumber the ground any longer?’” Now a fig tree is the most fruitful of all trees, having, in some places, three crops of figs every year, and should seldom be without some fruit among its green leaves. But the gardener replied—

“Leave it for one year more, and I will dig round it and manure it, and if it hath fruit, all will be well; but if not, then cut it down.” And so the tree was spared. The story meant this. The world is the garden, God is the Master, the fig tree is some careless one, and Jesus is the Gardener, who tries in many ways to make people good; and with this little story He ended His teaching at that village.

Remember, then, the fig tree which had no fruit, and the patience of the Gardener, and let it not be said of thee that thou hast no kind deeds, no loving words, no gentle thoughts to show as the fruit of the Spirit of God in thee.

And as the path of duty is made plain,
May grace be given, that thou may walk therein.

THE DISCIPLES SENT TO TEACH.

GALILEE, WINTER, A.D. 32.

Jesus had now been a Teacher for nearly two years, and had roused and prepared Galilee, till the crowds of people were so large that He felt it was time His disciples helped Him. He had often addressed His teaching specially to His disciples, He had invited their questions and explained their difficulties and encouraged them to bring their minds up to His level ; but chiefly by living with them, and showing them the best Example that the world has ever seen, did He prepare them, through love for Him, to teach and to suffer for His sake. For eighteen months, and some of them for longer, the disciples had been receiving the truth from Him, and now they were to give it out to others. Most of them were plain unlearned fishermen, who had read few books, learned no Greek classics or foreign languages, had not even closely studied the Bible when with Jesus ; how could they teach ? But Teachers of the truth, are not made by studying books or attending classes. One thing alone is necessary, the Spirit of God in them, and that, these fishermen had ; the Spirit which was in Jesus, and which would teach and guide them.

To Jesus, it was an important time. He was about to commit His teaching to other men, who would speak with His authority ; and gathering His disciples round Him, He spoke to them earnestly for a long time, telling them much that was new, and reminding them of things which He had said before. A group of twelve young men, with bowed heads and grave faces, they stood around Him leaning on their long countrymen's sticks, and listening earnestly, while He addressed them in some place apart, most likely seeking His favourite solitude among the hills. He had done much for them, and now they were to try what they could do for Him, their young Countryman and Master ; Peter, James, John, Andrew, Thomas, Philip, Bartholomew, James the Less, Jude, Matthew, Simon, and Judas were their names. He told them that they would

have power to heal sick persons and maniacs whom the people thought had evil spirits, and that they were to teach mainly in Galilee.

“Go out two by two,” He said, “but do not go to strange countries, nor to Samaria, but to your countrymen the Israelites, and say, ‘*The Kingdom of Heaven is near!*’ Heal the sick, raise the dead: you have received freely, give freely. Take neither gold, silver, nor brass money in your purses, nor bread in your bags, nor two coats, nor a stick, nor shoes, but only sandals: for the worker deserveth his food. When you go into a town or village, find out who is a worthy person in that village, and stay with him, and when you go into a house, say, ‘Peace be to this house,’ and if it be worthy of it, peace shall be upon the house, but if it be unworthy, your peace shall return to you. If any one shall not receive you, nor hear you speak, when you go out of that house or town, shake off the dust from your feet as a sign against it; and it shall be better for Sodom than for that town.” The disciples were thus at first to deliver only one simple message, the message that John and Jesus had spread, “The Kingdom of Heaven is near!”

“I send you out,” Jesus continued, “like sheep among wolves; be harmless as doves, and wise as serpents: but beware of men, for they will bring you before courts and judges, and scourge you in churches, yes, before kings will you be brought for My sake. But, be not anxious about what you shall then say. The Spirit of God will tell you in that very hour what to say; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of God that speaketh in you. Brother shall give up his brother, and you shall be hated for My sake, but whoever endureth to the end shall be saved. When they punish you in one town, fly to another, for you shall not have gone through all the towns of Israel, till I come again.

“A disciple is not better than his teacher. It is enough if he be the same as his teacher. If they have called Me ‘Spirit of Evil,’ much more shall they call you so; but do not fear them, for there is nothing hid that shall not be made

known. What I have told you in the dark, tell it in the light, and what you have heard in private, speak upon the housetop, and do not be afraid of them which can kill the body but cannot touch the spirit; but rather fear God, who can kill both body and spirit. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, yet not one of them is forgotten by God? Fear not! Ye are of more value than many sparrows. Every one who saith before men that he believeth in Me, Him shall I acknowledge before God and His angels; but whoever denieth Me before men, him will I deny." This then was the simple test by which the disciples were to know who were for Jesus and who against Him. If people were for Jesus they would say so. But He did not wish them to go out to teach thinking that everything would be easy and pleasant, for that would end in disappointment and distrust. That they might know the hardships that were before them, He added—

"Do not think that I came to bring peace to the world, but rather divisions. I came to make differences between a man and his nearest friends, and his enemies shall be in his own house; but whoever loveth father, mother, son or daughter, more than Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; but he that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it. Whoever receiveth you, receiveth Me, and whoever receiveth Me, receiveth God. Whoever receiveth a good man, in the name of a good man, shall receive a good man's reward. And whoever giveth if it be only a cup of cold water to one of My little ones in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward." And with these words Jesus ended His long address of warning, instruction, promises, much of which thou wilt not understand, and some of which I cannot explain to thee, for Jesus said things which cannot rightly be explained now. In the presence of the Pharisees and a crowd of people, He had warned His disciples before, that in following Him they would set their friends against them, and would even be punished, and He warned them again, before they took the grave step of going to teach up and down Galilee in His name, but not one of them wavered, all were ready to go. They

were to go in twos ; further on they would go out singly, but not yet ; and bidding them farewell, He left them to choose the companions whom they would go with, and went away by Himself, to teach also.

Remember, then, that as the disciples were guided and taught by the Spirit of God, and so wilt thou be guided as a little follower of Jesus, not in teaching crowds of people, but in doing thy small duty at home in kind and loving services to all about thee.

THE PRINCESS SALOME'S DANCE.

CASTLE MACHÆRUS, SPRING, A.D. 33.

John the Baptist was still a prisoner in the Black Castle of King Antipas. From his prison window he could see cliffs of red and black rock deep down, with pathless clefts and gorges, some filled with drifting sand, some with tangled undergrowth and tall trees, and far away were the lifeless waters of the Dead Sea, where no ships ever sailed. At times he heard shouts in the town below, when the king came, and there were revels and feasting in the palace, painful sounds to the man who ate few meats, and never tasted wine, and avoided company. Did he know that his life was swaying in the balance of this self-indulgent king ? Queen Herodias hated him, and wished him dead for speaking against her marriage, and now with smiles, and now in anger, she besought the king to have him killed ; but he feared the people, and respected John, and in his better moods the king had him brought down from his cheerless prison to a comfortable lighted hall, where, standing in his rough hair-cloth coat and belt of an animal's skin, with a feeling of awe, the king heard him speak of Heaven, and a world to come. His fearless words perplexed the king, but that was all, and he kept John safe from harm, and let his friends see him, yet he would not set him free, and so month after month passed, until more than a year had gone slowly by since John was first imprisoned.

Spring had come again, bringing the king's birthday and a holiday for the people, and King Antipas invited his lords and

officers to a birthday supper in his palace at Machærus. They came in their best robes of crimson and white and blue, their sword handles flashing with gold and jewels, to recline on soft silken sofas with the king at the low tables in the banqueting hall, the roof of which was covered with gold, the floor being of coloured marbles set in rare patterns and smoothly polished. Black slaves held aloft lights, while others served choice meats on gold and silver dishes, followed by ripe fruits, purple grapes, ruddy apples, soft peaches from the king's gardens, and bare-footed servants filled the golden cups of the guests with red wine as fast as they were emptied. Again and again they drank the king's health, and the queen's health, and wished them long life, till the king and his lords had drunk deeply.

After feasting came music from the king's musicians, who with psaltery, harp, pipe, castanets, cymbal, viol, flute and drum played and sung the king's praises. Then a space was cleared on the smooth marble floor, and dancing girls in gay dresses, with tinkling bells at wrist and ankle, waving thin coloured veils in the air, floated over the polished floor, and greatly pleased the guests. But it was usual to give the king a pleasant surprise on his birthday, and when he called for more dancing, suddenly a beautiful, richly dressed girl of high birth appeared, who smiled to the king, and he laughed, for he knew the lovely Princess Salome, the queen's only child, who had come herself to dance before him and his drunken lords. The music played again, and with sparkling eyes, her hair floating loose on her shoulders, her cheeks blushing to have so many men looking at her, she glided hither and thither over the shining floor, spinning round on tiptoe, waving her soft arms over her head and swaying her body to and fro in graceful gestures, as she performed the dance her mother had taught her. The lords thought it was a lovely sight, and the king was delighted that she should do this strange, this degrading thing, to please him. As, with movements still finer and steps yet more difficult, she continued to flit before them, they thought that she was the most

charming of dancers; and when, all out of breath, she stopped, and running forward, knelt down blushing before the king, to receive his praises, he exclaimed in the highest good humour—

“Ask anything of me, and I will give it thee!” Confirming what he said with a fool’s oath, and adding, “I will give thee whatever thou dost ask, even to the half of my kingdom.” The lords laughed; the princess was young, but she was clever, and telling the king that she wished to ask her mother what she should have, she tripped away out of the hall. Herodias, the queen, knew from the applause, that her surprise had pleased the king; perhaps through a chink of the door she had watched the princess dancing, and when she heard the king’s promise and his oath, a look of cruel triumph came into her face as she thought of the lonely prisoner in the castle. Flushed and breathless with dancing, Salome came to her mother.

“What shall I ask?” she cried.

“Ask for the head of John the Baptist,” was the eager reply that chilled the girl’s heart with horror. Visions of diamonds, pearls, horses, dresses, all that she loved, vanished at once. Was this what she had danced for? A bleeding head? She could not carry it! it would soil her pretty dress! “Get it in one of the large gold dishes from the table,” her mother replied with flashing eyes, as she bade her begone at once. Salome must also have hated John, for she went. But she was not the bright smiling girl who left the banqueting hall, when, pale and trembling, she returned and knelt again at the king’s feet with downcast eyes; but King Antipas was very happy, and thinking she was only overcome with modesty, he asked her what she had chosen, and all the lords bent forward to hear what she would say.

“I will that thou givest me in a charger *the head of John the Baptist.*” Even the drunken lords were filled with horror when they heard the low gentle voice of a woman asking such a thing. Was the banquet to be turned into an execution? “The queen hath done this,” they whispered to each other.

Would the king yield or refuse? He sat silent, astonished, confused, frowning under his glittering crown, for he knew it was the work of Herodias. What should he do? Could he break his promise? He called up his counsellors, and whispered with them, and concluded that having sworn an oath before all his lords, he must keep it. Had he been a good man however, he would have told the girl that his promise meant gold, jewels, land, not men's lives, and sent her out of his presence.

Turning to his soldiers, he ordered one of them to take a gold dish and go up to the dungeon in the castle, and bring John's head, and give it to this girl. The king sat silent with Salome crouching before him; and there was no laughter among the lords, as the slow minutes passed during which the soldier was away. Soon his footsteps were heard returning, and all gazed at him as he advanced to the fair kneeling princess and put the gold dish into her hands, with which she rose, sick, giddy, reeling, and fled from the hall to fling it at her mother's feet.

Think of the act and the reward! A few light steps, a few smiles, a few gestures of a dancing-girl, rewarded by the head, the life, of the greatest man that ever lived! John was thirty-two when he was killed in the dungeon, for no crime, for no reason, only to keep a king's drunken promise to a dancing-girl! There was no more feasting, no more dancing. Blackness seemed to fall on the gilded hall, and the guests went away, leaving the king to his own thoughts, which were bitter enough, for he never forgot that birthday feast. And often afterwards, when he heard wonderful stories of Jesus in different places, he thought that John had come alive again and would punish him. And did the princess ever forget the night when she danced before these lords?

Do thou remember, then, never to make rash promises, and that if thou shouldst make a wicked promise, not to be afraid to say that it was wrong, and to refuse to keep it, come what may.

THE RETURN OF THE DISCIPLES.

GALILEE, SPRING, A.D. 33.

It was in the Springtime of the year, when the vales of Galilee were covered with fresh green grass, and wildflowers coloured field and wood, when the lark and the blackbird were building their nests under the leafy shadows of tree and hedge, that in the gilded palace of King Antipas the tragedy of John the Baptist's death was played out, amid lights, drinking, dancing. Grieve for him! True child of the desert and mountain! fearless, untamable, he who told the crowds to leave him and follow his greater Friend Jesus; he who for many long months had dreamed of liberty as he watched the crimson clouds of dawn and of sunset through his prison bars, only to have his head given at last as a prize to a dancing-girl. His friends wished to bury him. Some say that the cruel queen Herodias had his body thrown from the walls of the Black Castle, others that his friends begged his body; but they got it, and buried it sorrowfully, and went and told Jesus. With what tears would Jesus hear of His cousin's death, ominous indeed of what would happen to Himself!

In six pairs the disciples went about from village to village of Galilee, doing as Jesus had bade them, healing and teaching in His name, and saying, "*The Kingdom of Heaven is near!*" The energy of these twelve young men roused in the people an increasing interest in Jesus, and a keen expectation of the coming of that glorious Kingdom which every Jew longed for, till everybody talked of Him. And their words were carried through the brazen doors of the king's palace, and found there a man with a guilty conscience. Some one told King Antipas that John the Baptist had risen from the dead, some said that Jesus was the old prophet Elijah come back to the world, and all seemed certain that Jesus was some great prophet come alive again. But the king believed He was John the Baptist come to rouse the people against him with greater power than before, for John used not to work wonders as Jesus now did, and the king asked his lords—

“John I killed, but who is this about whom I hear? It is John risen from the dead, who doeth these wonders!” And the king was anxious to see Jesus, to make sure with his own eyes. But although he invited, and then ordered Jesus to come to him, He would not come. His teaching was for the poor, not for kings—not for the murderer of His cousin John.

It is not known how long the disciples were out teaching; perhaps for weeks, perhaps months, but Jesus had fixed a time when they were to meet Him again on the Western side of the Lake of Gennesaret, and thither they came, to tell Him, like children, of all they had done, and of their astonishment at their power. He heard them, and saw that they needed rest and quiet. But they had brought many people with them, for they believed that the people would soon make Jesus King of that Kingdom of Heaven which they had proclaimed, for, as thou knowest, the disciples had been taught by their old Teachers to believe that when the Christ came He would be the King, and would banish all their enemies, and live in a splendid palace at Jerusalem, ruling the world. But this was a great mistake, and soon Jesus would tell them so. The people came day after day in such numbers that the disciples could not get time to rest or eat, and they became so roused and excited with their success that Jesus saw they must be taken away from these crowds, and one day He said—

“Come away with Me alone into a lonely place to rest for a while.” And He ordered them to get ready the boat. Most likely they did not wish to go, but He knew that the calm and silence of the hills alone with Him, was what the disciples needed to restore their minds. Besides, King Antipas wished to take Jesus a prisoner, and it was better that He should leave this King’s country, at least for a time.

The people came to the shore in crowds to see them off, and hearing that Jesus was going to Bethsaida-Julia, at the Northern end of the Lake, and in the country of King Philip, some launched their boats to follow Him, and others resolved to walk thither to meet Him when He landed, for, going over the hills it was only about six miles distant. When the

people saw His boat pointed to the North end of the Lake, in twos, and threes, and groups—men, women, and children, they started off to walk by the hill-road, watching the movements of the boat from each rising ground as they went.

From the boat Jesus saw the people walking along the road, and knew that they were determined to meet Him when He landed. Perhaps He delayed the sail in order to speak quietly to His excited disciples, for, by the time they had sailed to the top of the Lake, and a little way up the river Jordan to the landing place, there were already many of the people whom He had left on the other shore, waiting to meet Him. And He felt compassion for them, they seemed so much in need of care and teaching. He spoke kindly to them when He landed on the beach of gravel and shells that bounded the plain of Butaiah, for He knew that they had come to hear Him speak again of things which their own religious Teachers never told them. Tired as He was, He healed the sick, and leading the way to a green hillside, followed by a crowd of over five thousand persons, by the banks of the softly-flowing Jordan, made beautiful by the colours of the Spring flowers that burned among the grass and blossomed upon the bushes by the river's side, far away from the towns, He sat down to speak to the people again, about Heaven and God.

And thou wilt remember how these people followed Jesus to hear Him speak, and though thou canst never see Him as He stood in that green place, yet in town or country, alone or in crowds, thou canst hear His voice teaching thee, when thou choosest to listen.

Though we may never climb those hills,
Nor see that valley fair,
There's not a scene we look upon
But we may feel Him there.

CROWN HIM!

BETHSAIDA-JULIA, SPRING, A.D. 33.

A green hillside, with warm sunshine on it, a stretch of grass and flowers, a winding river, a blue Lake with mountains beyond—that was the quiet spot to which the people had followed Jesus, where the Jordan enters the Lake. Sitting on the hillside above them, they all saw Him in His white tunic, with His disciples standing near, and they listened in earnest silence to that one sweet Voice in that quiet place, telling them things which they had come miles to hear. How different from their old Teachers! for even children had run after Him and stood with their fathers listening. Hours passed, and He who had come to rest still spoke on, and the river's bank was dotted with rowing boats that had come from Tiberias, and were pulled up on the grass while the people went to listen. The great Spring Festival—the Passover—was again near, and the people were unsettled and beginning to make holiday; but the afternoon was passing, evening was approaching, and the disciples, with grave faces, talked in a group behind Jesus. The sun was beaming low over the purple hills of Galilee, many of the people had a long way to go home, and having followed Jesus in haste, they had brought no food, and the disciples feared that harm might come to the weak ones and the children in crossing the river Jordan, and on their way home through the lonely hills in the dark, where wild animals might rush out on them from caves or thickets.

At a pause in His speaking, one of the disciples, most likely Philip, went forward and reminded Jesus of the time.

"This place is lonely," he said, "and the time is past. Send the people away, that they may go into the country and villages round about and buy food for themselves."

"They need not go," Jesus answered. "Give them food."

"What!" exclaimed the disciples, "are we to go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread to give them?" They

wished to show that it was impossible to get enough food for such a crowd, who were now looking at them, and wondering what they were talking about. Turning to Philip, who belonged to that part of the country—

“Where are we to buy bread, that the people may eat?” Jesus asked him, saying this to test him, for He knew what He would do.

“Two hundred pennyworth of bread,” Philip replied with energy, “would not be enough for this crowd, that each one may get a little.”

“How many loaves have you?” Jesus asked. “Go and see.” They soon returned, and Andrew, speaking for them all, said—

“There is a lad here who hath five barley loaves and two small fishes, but what is that among so many people?”

“Bring them to Me,” Jesus replied. And while Andrew went to get the fishes and loaves from the boy, Jesus turned again to the people, no longer to teach, but to command them all to sit down upon the warm grass in groups of fifty and a hundred, and He told His disciples to go and see it rightly done. And soon the people were sitting upon the grass, like a peaceful army, with open pathways up and down among them, through which the disciples walked; and there were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

When the disciples returned, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes from the Lake, and looking up He blessed them, and gave thanks to God before all the people, and broke them, and giving them to the disciples, bade them divide them among the groups. And they carried them down the hillside to the people, going through the grassy lanes, and handing them out until they all had enough, the boy who had brought them getting some with the rest, and Jesus and His disciples ate along with them. And as the hungry men tasted the loaves and fishes, and felt their faintness going away, they began to be grateful and valiant, and thought what a splendid King Jesus would make; and how well He would

command soldiers, from the way He had ordered them to sit in companies, and had told His disciples, like officers, to see His orders carried out. Above all, He could work wonders ; with such a King they could conquer anything ! Surely He was the Christ who was to come and drive out the enemies of their nation, found a glorious Kingdom, and sit upon a throne for ever. And they whispered of these things to each other as they sat eating the loaves and fishes. But Jesus had more commands to give. When the people were done eating, He surprised His disciples by saying—

“Gather up all the broken pieces which are left, that nothing may be lost.” And the people wondered, as they saw the twelve disciples coming among them again, asking for all the broken pieces of bread and fish, and gathering them in a corner of their large cloaks ; and they were enthusiastic about Jesus, when they heard that He wished nothing wasted, for most of the people were poor. And when the disciples were done, it was seen that there was as much left over as would have filled twelve of the people’s common wicker baskets, and they were more than ever astonished and delighted, and openly said to each other—

“Truly this is the promised Christ that should come into the world.” And the men rose to their feet, and began to talk earnestly together. The Christ, they had been taught, was to be a *King*. Why should they not make Him their King *now* ? And they resolved, there, in that beautiful lonely place, away from towns and soldiers, to make Jesus their King at once. They would crown Him with a wreath of leaves in this green spot, and march back to-morrow to the towns by the Lake, rousing all Galilee, with the Wonder-worker at their head ! They knew that His disciples favoured His being a King. Had they not proclaimed everywhere that the long expected Kingdom of Heaven was near at hand ? They would make them His twelve officers ! “But,” said some one, “will He agree to be our King ?” And some answered “Yes,” and some said “No.”

"We are a great crowd," said one of the wilder men. "If He will not consent, we can force Him to be our King!" and they all agreed to this, and began to make preparations.

But Jesus heard that they were about to take Him by force and make Him their King; and, calling His disciples, who were anxious to see the people have their way, and would have willingly helped to crown Him, He ordered, He compelled them, to go down to their boat in the river at once, and return to Bethsaida, near Capernaum, as He wished to be alone with the people. And the disciples went. Returning, Jesus told the people that He had sent His disciples away in the boat, and that they must disperse and go to their homes; that He wished to be alone. And without waiting to argue with them, and forbidding any one to follow Him, He left them and went up to the higher hills above, while they stood gazing after Him in wonder.

When the shades of evening crept over the land, Jesus was once more alone among the silent hills. And well might He wish to be alone. Never had He been so grievously misunderstood as upon that day. The people thought that the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, of which He had so often spoken, was a kingdom of cities and armies like that of any other king. That excited crowd, these foolish disciples, would fain have forced into His hand a worldling's sceptre, and placed upon His head a people's crown, not knowing that the only crown which He should ever wear would be of plaited thorns, a blood-stained reed His only sceptre. And yet the tribute of these men was not a light thing. But how to turn their minds from an outward earthly kingdom to the Kingdom of Heaven within them, was the task of the morrow, for which He had to prepare.

And thou wilt not forget that the people wished to make Jesus a King of war, with a crown of gold, and He would not; but there is a crown which He will not refuse from thy little hands, the crown of thy love and worship.

BE NOT AFRAID!

GENNESARET, SPRING, A.D. 33.

As Jesus slowly climbed the grassy hills above Bethsaida-Julia, the figures of the people grew less and less upon the plain below. He saw some of them pushing off their boats and rowing down the stream, and others walking towards the road round the head of the Lake; while others lingered, as if waiting for His return; and He saw, too, the large boat with His disciples sailing out from the river. The sun sank behind the dark hills of Nazareth, and for a brief time cloud flakes of red and yellow floated in the purple sky; then darkness covered the land, and the sparkling stars came out. All was silent round Him, save for the cry of a passing bird as it winged its way home; but Jesus was trained in the highlands, and loved the loneliness of hills. He had had the highest honour offered to Him that day, which men give to men—the highest which He was ever offered. Five thousand men wished to bow the knee to Him, and call Him their King; all of whom would have fought for Him. Any one would have been touched by such worship, and Jesus most of all, though it was but earthly. Be a King and use force, and war, to found the Kingdom of Heaven! Oh! how mistaken were His followers! Loving hearts were to be His armies, the tongue and the spirit, the weapons which would spread His Kingdom throughout Galilee and the world.

As He prayed and thought of the morrow, the full moon rose over the black mountains behind Him, rose into the deep blue sky and shone upon the Lake, laying a pathway of silver upon the waves, over to the other side. And at midnight He saw the boat with His disciples being driven by a contrary wind across the pathway of the moon. The sail was pulled down, and they were rowing with oars, but were unable to go against the increasing wind, which was blowing them out into the Lake and away from the place where they wished to land. By three in the morning they had rowed only about four miles; and Jesus, coming down from the hill, walked upon the water

towards the tossing boat. They did not see Him until He was near, when one man, looking up from his oar as the boat rose upon a wave, saw the figure of Jesus on the water, His clothing white in the moonlight, walking as if He meant to pass them. An exclamation from this man caused the others to gaze over the side of the boat at the white figure which was coming nearer, and they all cried out in terror that it was a ghost, for at that time people believed in ghosts and wizards. Jesus heard their cries.

"Be glad. It is I. Be not afraid," He said, being now close to them. And He was grieved that in their terror they should not think of Him. Peter was the first to recover from his fear. He thought the voice was the voice of Jesus; his heart beat fast, and standing up in his place at the stern of the boat, He called through the wind—

"Lord, if it be Thou, tell me to come to Thee upon the water."

"Come!" was the single word which he distinctly heard; and, lowering himself down over the side of the boat, he walked upon the water towards Jesus. But he had not gone far when he began to look with dread upon the dark, swelling waves, lest he should be drowned; and at that instant he felt himself sinking.

"Lord, save me!" he called in terror. And Jesus put out His hand and took hold of him, saying—

"Oh, faithless one, why didst thou doubt?" Peter's only reply was to cling to His hand until they reached the disciples. When they were both taken into the boat, the storm was spent, and it became calm; and the others were astonished and glad to have Jesus with them again, and in that rough, open fishing-boat, on that dark Lake, they all worshipped Him, saying—

"Truly, Thou art the Son of God!" and for a time at least, they believed it.

They soon reached the other side, and moored the boat in one of the many beautiful bays that form the white shore at the plain of Gennesaret, not far from Capernaum; and

when the people came out in the early morning, they recognized the boat, and began again to bring their sick to Jesus on mats, and He healed them. And after this, wherever He went, in town or country or village, the people gave up what they were working at, and came to see Him, and laying their sick outside in the shade of the trees and of the houses, they begged Him to come near that they might touch the border of His cloak, and all who touched were healed.

And thou wilt remember that Peter was a brave and confident man, but when he became afraid, he grew weak ; and be not thou too confident in thyself, and when thou art in fear and danger, turn to Jesus for help, and He will strengthen thee.

IS NOT THIS JESUS ?

CAPERNAUM, SPRING, A.D. 33.

The people who had remained all night at Bethsaida-Julia began early next morning to look for Jesus to come down from the hills, and when He did not come, they sought Him but could not find him, for by that time he was in Capernaum. Giving up all hope of making Him their king then, they got into their boats, and sailed down the Lake to Capernaum, whither they believed the disciples had gone. There they found Peter's boat moored to the wharf, and empty, and going up to the town they heard that the disciples, with Jesus, were at the Thursday forenoon service in the church, and there they found Him, sitting on the chief seat with the other Teachers, and they were surprised, not knowing how He had come. When the reading was over, and the time came to speak, Jesus rose, and going to the reader's raised seat in the middle of the church, He sat down and taught the people ; and when He ended, one of those who had come that morning from Bethsaida-Julia, said—

“ Master, when didst thou come hither ? ” But Jesus knew that they had followed Him because of the bread they ate yesterday.

“ You seek Me,” He answered, “ not because of what you

saw, but because you ate of the bread and were satisfied ; but you ought not to seek bread which perisheth, but that thing which endureth, and which I shall give you"—meaning that they ought to follow Him for what He taught. Then some one, remembering the power which His disciples had received when they went out to teach, and wishing they could also do great things, asked—

“What must we do, that we may work the works of God?”

“Believe in Me, whom God hath sent,” Jesus replied : “that is the work of God.” But others, when they heard Him say that God had sent Him, raised the old Pharisee cry for Him to work a wonder, as a sign of his power.

“What wonder wilt Thou work as a sign,” they asked, “that we may see it and believe in Thee? What wilt Thou do? Our forefathers ate manna in the desert, for the Bible says, God gave them bread from Heaven. What wonder doest Thou?” They connected the bread of yesterday with the manna of long ago, and hoped Jesus would make more bread then and there, and astonish and convince the congregation by a sign, but He refused.

“Moses,” He replied, “did not give you the true bread of Heaven, but God by Me offereth it to you ; for I am the true Bread of God which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.” By “bread” Jesus meant the words which God had given him to speak, just as He called the Spirit “water,” to the woman at the well of Sychar. But the people, thinking He meant only bread for eating, exclaimed—

“Master, always give us this bread!” They thought He would again feed them wonderfully ; but He tried to draw their minds away from the bread which they had eaten yesterday, to Himself and to His words.

“I am that Bread of Life,” He said. “Whoever cometh to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believeth in Me shall not thirst. As I have told you before,—you listen to Me, but you do not believe Me. But I will not turn away any one who cometh to Me, for I came from Heaven, not to do Mine

own will, but the will of God, and His will is, that of all those whom He hath given Me, I should lose none. For it is the will of My Father in Heaven, that whoever believeth in Me shall have Heaven." The words of their young Countryman amazed them. *He* the Son of God? *He* the bread of Heaven?—and yet the more they looked at His calm beautiful face, the more they felt that He was far above them all. The silence which followed His long answer was filled by a murmur of tongues throughout the congregation.

"I am bread!" "Come down from Heaven!" "Why," they whispered to each other, "is not this *Jesus*, the Carpenter from Nazareth, whom we know, and whose father and mother we know? How can He say He came down from Heaven?" And they could not think what to make of His words. And yet how near to the truth they came that day in their blindness, calling Him "Jesus," and yet it did not enter their thoughts that He could be the Son of God, whom He said He was. Of course Jesus meant that it was His Spirit, the Spirit of God within Him, not His body, that had come down from Heaven. And hearing what the people said, He spoke again, not to answer them, but to tell them that the same Spirit of God would teach them that He was from God.

"Do not complain to each other," He said. "*Nobody can come to Me unless God draw him.* The Bible saith they shall all be taught by God. So every one who hath heard and learned from God cometh to Me,"—meaning that whoever listeneth to the voice of the Spirit of God speaking within him, will believe in Jesus. And then, while the people who crowded round the walls and pillars and looked in at the open doors of that little church, listened in rapt silence, Jesus uttered these great words.

"I say truly, that *whoever believeth in Me hath Heaven.* I am that Bread of Life. Your forefathers ate manna in the desert, and are all dead, but I am the true Bread of Heaven, which a man may take and not die; for I am the living Bread, and I came from Heaven. Whoever eateth of Me shall have Heaven; yes, and the bread which *I will give is My body for*

the life of the world." In these words we have the first intimation from Jesus that He expected to be killed. Again the people began to talk. They could not listen any longer in silence to such strange words, and argued hotly with each other as to whether He really meant that they would eat Him. But if thou hadst been there thou wouldst have said, "Certainly not; Jesus means that we are to receive His words as though they were bread." But the people still asked each other, "How can He give us His flesh to eat?" Jesus did not explain, but went on to speak of His words as if they were flesh and blood.

"Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood," He continued, "you can have no life in you. Whoever eateth and drinketh these, hath Heaven, for My flesh and blood are meat and drink indeed. Whoever eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood shall be joined to Me, and My Spirit shall be in Him; for, as the living God sent Me, and I live because of Him, so whoever eateth Me shall live because of Me. This is the true Bread that cometh from Heaven; not such bread as your fathers ate, for whoever eateth this Bread shall have Heaven."

With these words He ended speaking, and the people did not ask Him any more questions. His answers had gone deeper and deeper each time, and beyond their understanding, and they went away, the chief Jews arguing as they went down the sunny street from the little white pillared church in the upper town, about the strange, seemingly impossible things Jesus had said. And to all who would listen to them, the Teachers said He had spoken nonsense, and that for Him to say that they could have Heaven by eating His body, was a falsehood for which He should be punished. But Jesus did not mean any such thing. He meant that His words were to be taken in, as one would take flesh, bread, or water, and that His words would give the Spirit of God and Heaven to those who believed them. And thus He sought to turn the people's thoughts away from the bread of yesterday to that which was alone important,—His words and Spirit.

Remember, then, what He said in that humble little church,

and hearken to the voice of God within thee, drawing thee, turning thy face to Jesus, and bringing thee into Heaven.

MANY PEOPLE LEAVE HIM.

CAPERNAUM, SPRING, A.D. 33.

Jesus had now reached His greatest popularity. For more than two years He had taught the people and done wonders, and they believed He would reach a very high position, perhaps would be the King. Everybody at Capernaum talked about Him, crowds followed Him, and many friends new and old were round Him, some believing He was the Christ the Son of God, some that He was a great wonder-working Prophet, some that He would yet be their King, while many came only through curiosity to see the wonderful Carpenter of Nazareth.

But He had come to the turning-point in His public life; for He was about to tell His enthusiastic followers that He would never be their King, would never be anything but Jesus of Nazareth, would never have any of the world's prizes to offer them, and that if they did not follow Him for His teaching alone, they had better not follow Him at all. His friends were full of hopes of advancement, of riches, of power, firmly believing that in a few months He would declare Himself to be the nation's rightful King, and establish a powerful Kingdom that would last for ever. Following Him to the church at Capernaum, they expected He would there have told them something of His future plans, and perhaps have said when would come the triumph for which the disciples had stirred up the people; but instead of that He had held out no prospect of rewards, no hopes of power, things which they were all working for, but had spoken of their eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and of giving His body for the world, things which they could not understand. This was very disappointing. He would not do anything His followers wanted, but spoke of doing, not His own will, but the will of God, and when they came out of the church that Spring day,

many of those who had followed Him about the country with such admiration during these latter weeks, began to change their minds, as they talked over what He had said in the church. There was evidently to be no rising of the people, no fighting, no conquests, no rewards, no visible Kingdom; indeed, when they had most expected Him to speak plainly, He had spoken mysteries which they could not understand. And as His friends stood in the shade of the thick spreading trees to be out of the hot sunshine, and talked over His sayings with His disciples, outside the church, they shook their heads, and said—

“These are hard sayings. Who can understand them?” His followers wished to lead, not to follow, and stood in groups grumbling and discontented; but when Jesus heard of their displeasure, He came towards them.

“Have these things offended you?” He said. “What would you think if you should see Me going up into Heaven, where I was before? *The body is nothing; it is the Spirit of God that giveth Life; and the words which I have spoken to you they are Spirit and are Life.*” Thus He explained that it was foolish for any one to think He meant them to eat His flesh or drink His blood, for these could do no good. That He spoke of the Spirit of God, and what He meant by eating, was receiving, and believing His words, which were the Spirit of God. Receive and believe His words, and they would have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, would become subjects of His Kingdom of Heaven in the world. A child might understand Him now. But as He looked at the gloomy faces of the men, shaded by their kerchiefs of yellow, red, or white, who only yesterday would have made Him their King, He saw that the end of their selfish, mistaken, worldly hopes, had turned many against Him, and He was grieved and perhaps angry, as He said to them plainly—

“There are some of you still who do not believe Me!” But He would not argue longer, or further try to convince them that He spoke the truth, and turning away, He addressed these last words to His own chosen disciples, as a

test to try themselves by, at this grave turning point, for He knew their thoughts—

“As I said to you before, nobody can come to Me unless the Spirit of God puts it into him to come.” And turning away alone He left them to consider whether they felt drawn by God to continue with Him any longer, or whether it was only the hope of money and rewards that had brought them thus far.

And now came the trial of His followers. They were scattered about in picturesque groups, here the rich Pharisee from Judæa, in his flowing robes and white turban, talked excitedly to the brown-faced country people with their blue and grey cloaks, who stood listening with doubtful faces; and there, seated on the ground their heads covered by their long coloured kerchiefs, other followers talked the matter over among themselves. Should they go on or turn back was the question. They who did not believe His words were not drawn by the Spirit of God; they who believed Him, were. They could choose for themselves. The test was simple, and it is true to this day. But these last words of Jesus had an astonishing and immediate effect; for the people began to disperse and go off to their homes and their villages, their potteries and tan-yards, fishing-boats, sheepfolds, farms, and fruit gardens. Some were angry, and went away offended, others were glad of an excuse for leaving Him, others were disgusted that He should fling away such a splendid chance of being a great King, and helping them all. They would go no more with Him, and His followers went away in such numbers, that it seemed as though nobody would remain behind.

Standing apart by themselves, with very grave faces, were His twelve disciples, for they doubted the prudence of the words which had offended so many. They were sorry to see the people going away, bitterly disappointed to see this apparent end of their hopes and work, but still they stood firm, with Peter at their head, for the Spirit of God was in them. Jesus came back to them, and speaking sadly of those whose

backs were now turned upon Him, He said with a look that must have brought tears into their eyes—

“Will ye also go away?” Then Peter spoke for the twelve, Peter, one of the first to follow Jesus,—who had worked for Him by night and day, on land and water, who had given Him a home and a boat, and who loved the brave sensitive nature, of Jesus, and worshipped His pure Spirit; for his bold hasty temper was roused, roused by the sight of cowards and hypocrites deserting his young Master and fellow-countryman! and his reply was a vehement question—

“Lord,” he exclaimed impetuously, “Lord, to whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of Heaven, and we believe and know that Thou art the Holy One of God.” A noble answer! Using Jesus’ own words as the best of reasons why they would not leave Him. With the Spirit of God drawing them, Peter asked whether it were possible for them to follow any other one than Jesus, and He was angry when he saw the insincerity with which He had been followed by so many people, and his strong rugged heart was only the more determined to stand by their young Master, the more he saw Him deserted by others. His vehement words put courage into the rest of the disciples, and Jesus was deeply moved.

“Did I not choose you to be My disciples,” He replied sadly, “and yet one of you hath a spirit of evil?” Judas was the one.

The day of trial was over. The test had been applied, the test of the Spirit; the false had gone, the true remained, and it was with deep emotion that Jesus walked back to Peter’s house. He had made His position clear before all the people, He could never be their King, nor give them money, as other kings did, for His Kingdom was in their own minds, and all had not left Him. It was to Him a day of deliverance, although to some He seemed to have been put back to where He was eighteen months before, with only twelve men round Him.

Remember, then, the test which Jesus gave the people that day, and which decided between His false and His true fol-

lowers ;—whether they followed Him for His words, drawn by the Spirit of God to love, trust, and believe Him, or whether they followed Him for some other reason, for that is still the test of His followers.

SPIES FROM JERUSALEM.

CAPERNAUM, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

April had come again. Round every spring and by every watercourse that wound across the rich plain of Gennesaret the oleander bushes were again filled with flowers of crimson and pink, even down to the white shore at the Lake, while the olive trees were covered white with blossom, thick as the flourish on our native hawthorn; the woods rang with the singing of birds, and the people rejoiced, for the great Passover Festival was near. But Jesus did not go to it this year. He knew that the chief Jews at Jerusalem, remembering what He had said and done at the last Passover, were watching for Him, and that they had resolved if they caught Him to have Him killed; and He remained in Galilee. But when the priests found that He had remained away from the Festival, and hearing wonderful stories about Him from the people who had come from Capernaum, they held a meeting of their highest council, and appointed some men to go again to Galilee and follow Jesus as spies. And when the Festival was over, these spies came down to the Lake-side, and found Him going about among the villages teaching with His disciples. They watched Him in walking, in teaching, in eating, in drinking, these high religious Teachers from Jerusalem, and they soon found something to say against Him,—His disciples did not always wash their hands before taking food! That was what they discovered, and though this was nothing new, they thought it would be enough to report to Jerusalem, that Jesus was still breaking their rules about hand-washing. For they said that people must not only wash their hands before food, but wash them in a particular way, by having water poured on them and rubbing the back of one hand upon the palm of the other, then putting both hands together and holding them up, until the

water ran down to their elbows, then turning them quickly down before the water could run off, and then up again before it could pass their knuckles, pouring clean water upon them once when lifted, and twice as they hung down, repeating certain words all the time. They had also many other rules, about sprinkling couches with water before lying on them, and pots and pans and cups before using them. Now the disciples, following the example of Jesus, only washed their hands when they wished. But these spies wanted to catch Jesus, and meeting Him upon the road one day they stopped Him and demanded—

“Why do Thy disciples break our rules, for they do not wash their hands before eating bread?” They did not know what Jesus had said to the Pharisees and Lawyers in the Pharisee’s house in a Galilæan village about nine months before, or they might not have put this question. His answer was unexpected—

“You break the commands of God, He said, that you may keep your own sayings, disobeying what is written in the Bible, that you may carry out your own rules.” And He showed, that in order to get money for their great Temple at Jerusalem, they had made a greedy and cruel rule that broke one of the most beautiful commands of God. “God’s commandment in the Bible,” He continued, “is,

“‘Honour thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

“‘And he that revileth his father or mother shall surely be put to death.’

“But you have made a rule which says, that if a man shall give to the Temple the money which he ought to give to his father and mother, he is free from giving it to them, thus breaking the commandment that a man is to give to his parents, by the little rule which you have set up for yourselves.” The spies could not deny that if a son gave the priests his money, they would pardon him for not giving it to his father and mother. Now, it is one of the highest duties of children to honour and love and support their parents, who have done so much for them,

and nothing can excuse a child for disobeying this, and yet there are countries called heathen, where this command of God is better obeyed than in Christian England! Turning to the people who had come to listen, Jesus went on to show the folly and wickedness of these rules of the priests.

“‘The words in the Bible,” He said, “written long ago by Isaiah about the Jews, are true to-day of these Pharisees.

“‘. . . This people draw near Me with their mouth,

“‘And with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their hearts far from Me,

“‘And their fear of Me is a commandment of men, which hath been taught them.’

“But,” He continued, “it is no use their pretending to worship God when they teach their own rules in place of God’s commandments. Listen to Me, and understand. Nothing which a man eateth can make him either good or bad, but what he speaketh may do so.” And leaving the Jerusalem spies rebuked, and their petty rules set aside before the people, Jesus resumed His walk with His disciples along the sunny road towards Peter’s house.

Now, the people had been taught by their religious Teachers, and believed very strongly, that it was wicked to eat certain kinds of food, including rabbits, pigs, and many other animals, and certain kinds of fish, and birds, and the disciples also believed it; and when they heard Jesus say that a man might eat anything, they were surprised, and asked Him when they got into the house—

“Dost Thou know that the Pharisees were offended with what Thou didst say?”

“Let the Pharisees alone,” He answered. “Every plant which God hath not planted shall be rooted up. These Pharisees are like blind guides, and if blind guides lead blind people, both shall fall into the ditch.” He meant that the Pharisees, who had not God’s Spirit, taught the people wrongly.

“Explain to us,” said Peter, speaking for them all, “what Thou saidst to the Pharisees about eating all kinds of food.”

“Even yet,” Jesus replied, “do you not understand Me? The food that a man eateth is to keep him alive, and cannot make him good or bad, but wicked words show a wicked mind, and from them come wicked thoughts and wicked deeds. These make a man bad. But to eat all kinds of food, or to eat without washing your hands, can never make you wicked.” Thus He said that all food was good to be eaten, freeing the people at once from many hard rules about food which their religious Teachers had laid upon them. In His teaching Jesus had now broken through and spoken against the Sabbath rules of the priests, their meat rules, their hand and pot washings, their false teaching, their long prayers, their gifts to the Temple; and had accused the Teachers of teaching their own rules and sayings instead of the laws of God; and these spies sent word to the council of priests at Jerusalem of all that this young Galilean was saying and doing. But Jesus continued calmly to tell the people about Heaven and the will of God.

Remember thou what Jesus said about loving and honouring thy father and mother, and never let a harsh or scornful word escape thee, nor think that thou canst ever repay their early love; for when thou couldst not speak, they fed thee; when thou couldst not walk, they carried thee; when thou wast ill, they nursed thee, and now that thou canst run, thou must run for them; for there is no more heavenly sight than a joyful child running to and fro, helping and obeying his father and mother, as Jesus did, when a child.

THE TOWNS OF TYRE AND SIDON.

PHŒNICIA, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

For more than a year the churches of Judæa had been closed against Jesus by the council of priests, nor could He safely visit that part of the country; and now they gave orders that He should not be allowed to teach in the churches of Galilee either, and He was daily watched and annoyed by the Pharisees. He had been unable to get

that rest which He wished at Bethsaida-Julia, and He determined to go away with His disciples, unknown to the people, into a part of the country beyond Galilee to the Northward, where He had not been before. Leaving Capernaum privately, He walked along the road which led from the Northern end of the Lake up to the hills about Safed, the highest town of Galilee. He was going into the district of Phœnicia bordering on the great Mediterranean Sea, where there were two large seaport towns, called Tyre and Sidon, rich and populous; and where the people did not worship the God of the Jews, but had gods of their own, and were called heathens by the Jews. Summer was now advancing, and the roads were hot and dusty; but a walk of six miles brought them to the highest part of the hills of Northern Galilee called Naphtali, from which they could see the boundless blue ocean, the small Lake of Gennesaret, and the wooded Lebanon mountains rising up to snow-capped Hermon. Six miles more and they were nearly out of Galilee, and it is likely that they then rested for the night in some friend's house. But it became known that Jesus was there, and on the next day, as He walked with His disciples, a Syrian woman, who had come from a distance, came crying after Him—

“Lord! have mercy on me, Thou Son of King David. My little girl is much troubled with an evil spirit.” But Jesus took no notice of her. He wished to test her earnestness. Did this woman, in her curious dress of bright colours, and speaking a strange language, really believe that He could help her? She still continued to follow, and His disciples, dreading the notice which her behaviour would bring upon them, stopped Him.

“Send her away,” they said, “for she crieth after us.” He replied that He had been sent to heal and teach Jews, not strangers; but He did not say he would not listen to her. Coming up to Him as He stood, she bowed herself at His feet, and worshipped Him.

“Lord! help me!” she said earnestly, for she believed He would not send away a sorrowing woman who begged not for

herself, but for another ; but Jesus wished to try her further. She had heard part of what He had said to His disciples, and He repeated it to her in a different way.

“The children must first be fed,” He said, meaning that the Jews must be attended to before strangers, whom they were accustomed to call “dogs,” adding, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and give it to the dogs of the house.” But the woman was not to be turned away. She did not say that the Jews had no right to call them “dogs ;” she only pleaded for a little kindness.

“Yes, Lord !” she answered, “but even the dogs under the table eat of the children’s crumbs which fall from the master’s table.” Thou hast seen how the dogs in a farmer’s kitchen come in and walk round the table at dinner-time. They did the same in that country. And seeing the woman’s faith, Jesus said—

“O woman, great is thy faith ! Because of what thou hast said, go away, for I have granted thy wish. The trouble hath left thy daughter.” With glad steps the woman hurried away to her distant home, thanking Jesus in her heart as she went ; and when she got there she found her little girl no longer uttering strange cries, but well again.

Soon after this, Jesus and His disciples walked away from the hills of Galilee down into the lower country of Phoenicia, by the road which led to the large town of Tyre on the seaside. They were now out of the country of King Antipas, and if they continued on the well-known road from Galilee to Tyre, by the end of the second day they looked down upon a pleasant green plain, celebrated for its oranges, apricots, peaches, pears, and other delicate fruits, and saw the splendid buildings and monuments, smoking chimneys, and masts of the ships of the town of Tyre, which was built upon an island that jutted out into a wide blue sea that had no ending but the distant clouds and sky. It is not likely that they went into this town of famous dyers in purple, blue, and crimson, and coloured glass-workers, for He had come to rest. The road from Tyre lay along the edge of the great sea to the Northward for

twenty miles, with so many valleys coming down to the sea that they would have to cross seven rivers on their way, and then they would reach the second great seaport called Sidon, well known in Jerusalem for its rich merchants, and for ships that sailed to all parts of the world. It is not likely that Jesus went into this town either, or saw its tall houses, its weavers at their looms, its brass-workers, or its gem-engravers, for the people sent their art manufactures to all countries. Here there were no persecuting Lawyers nor spying Pharisees, and as it was a delightful time of the year, the time of rich fruits, ripening crops, and thick shady trees, with no rain for months, it is likely that He spent some time in Lower Phoenicia by the cool sea before turning towards the hills of Upper Galilee again.

Remember how this poor foreign woman persevered in begging Jesus to help her daughter, and how highly He praised her ; and do not thou be cast down by little difficulties which may oppose thee, but work on and trust in Him.

THE SNOWS OF HERMON.

DECAPOLIS, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

Leaving the neighbourhood of the town of Sidon by the sea, with its glass furnaces, potteries, and ship-yards, passing through its flower-gardens and orchards, where pears, and peaches and lemons grew among leaves of brightest green, and where sweet perfume was wafted from the white blossom of the orange trees, Jesus and His disciples went Northward from the sea to the hills, crossing many rivers and climbing the steep range of the Lebanon hills, whose slopes were covered with green tapering cedar trees, whence they could see the distant mountain of Hermon, with its white peak. They then descended from the hills to the Lebanon villages, where they spent some time, and walking on, crossed more rivers and streams, as they turned Southwards, so as to approach the Lake of Gennesaret again upon the opposite side from that which they left. Forging the pebbly bed of

the upper Jordan, they passed the foot of Mount Hermon, the highest mountain in the land, whose crest was covered with snow, far up, sparkling in the Summer sunshine. Keeping away from the town of Cæsarea-Philippi, the fashionable capital of Philip's country, with its king's palace, hot springs, temples, grottos, and statues, they entered the land of Decapolis, so called because of the ten principal cities, Philadelphia, Gadara, Hippos, Damascus, Raphana, Dio, Pella, Gerasa, Kanatha, and Scythopolis, which were scattered over the high country of green plains and red hills to the East of the Lake of Gannesaret. It is not known how long Jesus was away upon this journey. Going from Sidon round by Mount Hermon, and coming again to the Lake on the Eastern side, He had to pass through wild hilly country, with marshes and streams to cross, and no regular roads ; and as He was in no haste to return to Galilee, He would take some weeks to travel this distance of over a hundred miles.

At one of the villages of Decapolis, which was regarded by the Jews as quite a heathen region, a man was brought to Jesus who was deaf, and who stammered so much that the people could not understand him when he spoke. His friends begged Jesus just to put His hand upon him, for the poor man believed that He could heal him. A crowd of curious people gathered round Jesus and the man, as they stood in the hot sunshine, expecting to see a wonder ; but Jesus was grieved that they should thus come to gaze at Him out of curiosity, as though He were a wizard and not a Teacher, and He took the man away privately from among the people ; and when they were alone by themselves, He put His fingers into the man's ears, and wetting His finger, touched his tongue, and looking up to Heaven, sighed as He said—

“Be opened !” And immediately the man was healed. Why did Jesus sigh ? People sigh when they are sad, and He was grieved and cast down by the behaviour of these people of Decapolis. When He returned with the man, He told the people earnestly not to speak about what He had done, for He never liked them to speak of such things ; but they were

astonished, and cared so little for Jesus that they told it far and wide, wherever they went.

“He doeth all things well,” the people cried ; “He maketh even the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.” They did not call Him the “Son of God” in Decapolis. He was only a Wonder-worker to them, and they followed Him in crowds, out of curiosity, the very thing which Jesus did not like them to do. Leaving Decapolis, He came to the land of Gadara again, on the Eastern side of the Lake, where He had healed Legion about eight months before and left him to teach the people, and as He approached the Lake there was a crowd of people following Him, and He rested on a hillside, and looked down upon the blue waters dotted here and there with the sails of fishing-boats, and over at the towns of Capernaum and Magdala on the opposite side, to which He was about to return. The news spread of His arrival, and the people gathered in greater numbers, climbing up the hillside in the hot sunshine with their sick, and He healed them. As each was brought to Him they went away rejoicing, and the people wondered when they saw the dumb speaking and the lame walking. They did not know how to thank Him, but they heard Him mentioning the name of God as He spoke to the sick, and as English crowds cheer when they are glad, so did this crowd upon the warm hillside rejoice and glorify the God of Jesus.

My child, do not forget to thank God for thy days of strength and happiness. If thou hast ever been very ill thou wilt know what it is to be grateful for returning strength, and will have felt that it is a time, above all, to remember to thank God for His goodness to thee.

ON A BROWN HILLSIDE.

GADARA, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

Many of the people who were with Jesus on that sunny hillside overlooking the Eastern shore of the blue Lake of Gennesaret, had followed Him for three days, and would not

go away. They delighted to look at Him, and to listen to His words. It was Summer time, the nights were short and warm, and the people could sleep in tents and even in the open air with their outer cloaks wrapped round them. But they had no food, and there were no places near, where bread could be bought, and if the people were to start for their distant homes, what with hunger and thirst and the great heat, many might faint by the way. This was the second time that a crowd had followed Jesus into a place where no food could be got, and would not go away. Only a month or two ago, amid the fresh spring grass at Bethsaida-Julia, He had fed five thousand people, who in return had wished to make Him their King. But when asked in the Capernaum synagogue on the following day to make bread again, He had refused. Would He do it now for these simple people who could not cross the water, as He intended to do? There, with the lovely scenery of the Lake, its shores, rocks, cliffs, and the plain of Gennesaret deep down below them, and the hills and woods of Nazareth and Carmel spreading far beyond, under a blue sky the hours of sunshine passed, and night was approaching.

"I am grieved for the people," He said, calling His disciples aside to speak to them, "for they have been with Me three days and three nights, and now have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the road, for some of them have come a long way." Thinking He wished them to go for bread, a disciple replied—

"Whence should we have enough loaves in this lonely place to feed so many people?"

"How many loaves have you?" Jesus asked, knowing they would have some bread for themselves.

"Seven loaves, and a few small fishes," was the reply. He bade them bring what they had, for He liked them to do what they could, and standing forth that all might see Him, He told the people to come near and sit down on the ground, and they did so, sitting not on green turf as at Bethsaida-Julia,

but on brown scorched grass, warm rocks, and yellow sand. The disciples then arranged the people in bands as they had done before, with spaces for walking about amongst them. When they were all seated, Jesus took the seven loaves and gave thanks to God before them all, and breaking the loaves, gave them to His disciples to give to the people. Then taking the fishes He blessed them and gave them to His disciples in the same manner.

There were four thousand men there, besides women and children, not sitting in a cool green slope as before, but on a hot hillside, with no trees to shade them, in bright groups, friends together, families together, with their cloaks of blue and grey, red and yellow, and heads covered with bright kerchiefs to keep off the sun, their brown faces all turned towards Jesus, as He sent out His disciples with fish and bread. And as they walked down the narrow yellow lanes, dusky hands were held out and thanks given for the food, and blessings showered on Jesus in strange excited words. A clamour of tongues rose from the crowd as they sat eating and wondering whence the food came. Perhaps some of them had been among those who were fed at Bethsaida-Julia, and could tell their neighbours, for it spread through the whole company that it was the work of Jesus. When the people had all been served, He and His disciples ate with the rest, and among the crowd were mothers and little children, who had come from their homes to see Him, and the little ones ate until they were satisfied. When all had finished, the disciples, this time without being told, went through the people again gathering up the broken pieces of bread and fish that were left, for they knew Jesus did not wish any to be wasted, and when the broken pieces were all put into a heap there was as much as would have filled seven willow baskets.

Then Jesus stood up and told the people that they were all to go back to their own homes and villages, for He was going away from this place. And the people obeyed Him, streaming down the hillside in every direction, some hoping to get home before darkness came on. There was no talk this time of

making Him their King. The disciples and the people had learned that He would receive no such honours, and that love and obedience alone were what He would take from them.

Word had been sent to the other side for Peter's large fishing boat, and when the people were gone, Jesus and His disciples went down to the shore, and getting into it, set sail across the Lake, towards the place whence He had started some weeks before for Tyre, thus completing the longest journey He ever took, although He was never further off than two or three days' walking distance from Capernaum. He was now refreshed and rested, and better prepared to meet the attacks of His enemies which He knew would rise around Him again, as soon as they heard of His return.

Peter's boat, with its great brown sail, was not long in carrying Jesus and His disciples across the Lake, and before the anchor was thrown out, there were a number of people waiting on the beach to meet Him. He landed on a rocky shore, under high towering cliffs, between the towns of Magdala and Dalmanutha, and His old enemies, the Pharisees, were out spying His movements. They had made friends of the wild Herodians, and found them of little use, but there were rich and powerful men, called Sadducees, who did not care much about religion, but who were against any man who wished to take away their power, and with them the Pharisees now made friends, although the Sadducees hated and ridiculed the Pharisees. When Jesus returned, these Sadducees were ready, waiting to press Him also to work a wonder as a proof that He was from God, a thing which they knew He would not do, and they believed they could thus set the people against Him. Before He had even walked into the town, the Sadducees and Pharisees met Him on the road, and for the first time He knew that these proud and powerful men had combined with the Pharisees against Him. When they saw the common people glad to meet Him, they came forward, and ordering the people to stand aside, called upon Him to work a wonder before them.

“Show us a sign,” they said, “that Thou art from God,” and, knowing He would not do so, they were bold and threatening. Now this grieved Him much, for He had often told the Pharisees that He would not work a sign, and He sighed deeply as He looked around on the people. His answer was similar to what He had given the Pharisees before. With memories of His boyhood among the hills at Nazareth, when He used to climb the grassy slopes to watch the crimson clouds of evening in the skies, He replied—

“In the evening you say it will be fine weather to-morrow, for the clouds are red, and in the morning you say it will be bad weather to-day, for the clouds are red and threatening. You Sadducees understand the look of the clouds, but you do not understand the signs of the present time. You are wicked men, asking Me to work a wonder as a sign to please you, but no sign shall be given you but the sign of Jonah.” And again He refused, and turning from them, walked away with His disciples and the friends who had come to meet Him. Then the Sadducees and Pharisees would tell the crowd that He was not from God, since He would not work a wonder when they asked Him; but He paid no further heed to them.

And when thou thinkest of Jesus, remember His kindness to the hungry children and fathers and mothers who had followed Him out from their homes to the warm hill beside the blue Lake at Gadara.

MEN LIKE TREES WALKING.

BETHSAIDA, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

Jesus found, that owing to the opposition of His enemies, it was better He should not remain at the place where He had landed, on the West side of the Lake of Gennesaret, and, after a short time, He went into the boat again with His disciples to sail to another place. The great brown sail was hoisted to the top of the mast, the anchor taken in, and once more they were gliding along the blue Lake, under the wooded

cliffs of Magdala where the green branches dipped into the water, skirting the beach of white shells close to the fruitful plain of Gennesaret with the tree-clad hills behind, and heading away towards the North end of the Lake. He felt sad, as He looked out upon the shore which He was leaving, and thought of the wicked combination of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and how constantly they pressed Him to do that which He would never do, to show, at their request, by a wonderful sign, that He was from God. How cruel and determined were they to oppose Him and tell the people false things! And as He sat with the glow of the setting sun lighting up the brown sail, with the purple haze of evening settling upon the hills, and distant sounds coming softly from the shore, He said to His disciples in a warning voice—

“Take care! beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the leaven of King Antipas.” By “leaven,” He meant to beware of the words of these wicked men, because wicked words spread like leaven. The disciples, in their hurry, had forgotten to take enough bread in the boat, having only one loaf for them all; and not understanding Him, they began to whisper together that He was displeased with them for forgetting bread. But Jesus overheard them.

“Oh! you men of little trust!” He exclaimed sadly, “Why do you talk with each other because you have no bread? Do you not see, do you not understand, have your hearts become hard? Can you not see with your eyes and hear with your ears, and do you not remember? When I divided five loaves among five thousand men, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?”

“Twelve baskets full,” the disciples answered humbly. And He went on—

“And when I divided the seven loaves among four thousand men yesterday, how many baskets did you take up?”

“Seven baskets full,” they answered again.

“Then why do you not yet understand?” He continued. “How is it that you do not see that I speak to you not about

leaven, but about words. Beware, therefore, of the *words* of these wicked men." The disciples then understood that He spoke of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and they were sorry when they thought of the little and distrustful meaning which they had put upon His words. And again all was silent, save the plashing of the water at the bow of the boat and the creaking of the sail on the mast. Skirting the North-western shores, they sailed on in the calm of evening past Magdala, Capernaum, and the other towns, where the people recognised Peter's boat as it went by, and knew that Jesus had returned ; but Peter steered for the place where the river Jordan enters the Lake at its Northern end, and sailing into the river as far as they could go, they took down the sail and cast anchor at the green Western bank. Landing from the boat, they walked up to the quiet little village of Bethsaida, whose houses shone white upon the hillside, there to stay for a few days.

Like those of Decapolis, the people were very curious to see Jesus perform some wonder, for they knew of Him feeding five thousand people on the plain of Bataiah on the other side of the river Jordan, and that He healed the sick ; and one day, when He was teaching in the open air in the village, they brought a blind man, and asked Him to touch him ; then they stood round, expecting the wonder to be performed. Now it grieved Jesus that these people should be so anxious to see a wonder, and yet He could not leave the poor man blind. I know not what He said to the man, but He took him by the hand and asked him to come aside with Him, just as He did the deaf man in Decapolis. The people were disappointed ; but Jesus went away from the crowd, gently leading the way down the main street of the village, with the blind man's hand in His, who followed on, not knowing whither he was going, but listening to His words and holding by Him. The people saw them from their doors and houses and shops, as they passed by in the sunshine ; and children ran to gaze at them with loving eyes, for they knew the face of the young Countryman, and marked the sightless eyeballs of the blind

man ; and while many guessed what was about to happen, no one followed them. At length they passed out by the gate in the village walls, and walked on until they were alone in the fields, and then Jesus stopped.

We do not know what He said, or whether the man told Him that when he was a child he could see, and knew what flowers and fields and trees and men were like, and that he had lost his sight, perhaps in the common way, by sand blowing into his eyes. Jesus did not heal him at once, but spitting upon his eyes, He put His hands over them, and said—

“Seest thou anything?”

“I see men ! for I see them like trees walking !” the man exclaimed joyfully, looking towards the village. He had not forgotten the shapes of men, for blind men do not forget the world of sunshine which they once knew, though they live in darkness. Jesus put His hands again over his eyes, and when He took them away the man looked earnestly towards the village, and he could see quite well ; and thanked Jesus over and over again, and wished to go back to the village to show what He had done for him ; but Jesus did not wish that, for He never liked the people to talk of His wonders. He wished to heal the poor man, but not to create astonishment among the villagers ; and finding that the man did not live in the village, He told him to go away home at once and tell no one what He had done, adding particularly—

“Do not even go into the village.” And so they parted, the one to go home rejoicing, the other to return quietly to the village and His disciples ; while the people, who expected to see a sight when they came back, saw only the young Countryman returning up the street alone ; and no one asked Him what had become of the blind man.

What Jesus told His disciples in the boat is also for thee. Beware of wicked words, for they spread quickly, and entering the mind, make wicked thoughts. If thou wouldst check this, refuse to listen to wicked words, for thy mind is the curtained and holy temple wherein dwells the Spirit of God—the pure, the heavenly guide of thy young life.

WHO AM I ?

NEAR CÆSAREA PHILIPPI, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

From the village of Bethsaida, Jesus went away with His disciples back into the strange country through which they had lately passed on their road from Tyre and Sidon. Walking Northwards from the Lake of Gennesaret, they kept along by the river Jordan with its overhanging trees and tall green canes, past waterfalls and rapids ; past the small Lake Merom, round whose marshy shores roamed herds of black buffaloes among thickets of papyrus reeds whose white flowering tops waved higher than a man's head. They went up towards the high country near the foot of Mount Hermon, where was the gay town of Cæsarea Philippi, the favourite town of King Philip, who had built it and called it after the Roman Emperor Cæsar, and himself. It was built on a rocky terrace of the great mountain, with a splendid view of the beautiful country through which the Jordan, springing from fountains of clear water in a huge cave under a hill, wanders like bands of silver through the marshy plains below. And as Jesus walked along the paved Roman road that led across the Jordan bridge and towards the city, He saw, waving in the valleys and plains below, mulberry, oak, and plane trees, amid richly flowering honeysuckle, clematis, oleander, and wild roses ; while the wheat crops were already yellow in the fields, some of which were being reaped. Cæsarea Philippi was only twenty miles from the Lake of Gennesaret, and as Jesus walked, He taught in the villages by the way, for the Sadducees who had caused Him to leave Capernaum did not follow Him out of Galilee. He even went into Cæsarea Philippi itself, that city of palaces, theatres, baths, statues, and grottos ; the fashionable place to which the rich people came at that time of the year, when the midsummer heat about the Lake of Gennesaret was unbearable. But there were many foreigners in the town, and He does not seem to have attracted attention.

Jesus had now been a Teacher for two and a half years, and

He was anxious about the result of all His work. He thought of the shouts and exclamations of the crowds that had followed Him : of the persecuting Pharisees who had closed the churches against Him and roused the Sadducees, so that He could not return in peace to Capernaum. He thought also of the work He had yet to do, and that soon it would all be over. Driven away from His own lovely Galilee, in His recent wanderings among strange villages, He had had sad reflections, and now He resolved to ask His disciples what the people thought and said about Him. Retiring with them to the quiet of a lonely hill, He prayed to His Father in Heaven to help Him at this time, for He had to decide whether He should remain any longer in safety in strange places and villages, or return to the Lake towns, and face the violence of the powerful Sadducees.

“Whom do the people say that I am?” He asked His disciples one day. Now they had heard the people saying a great many things, and one answered—

“Some think Thou art John the Baptist come alive again ;” another replied, “Some think Thou art the old prophet Elijah returned to the earth ;” and another said, “They say Thou art the prophet Jeremiah.” “Other people say that Thou art certainly one of the old prophets risen again from the dead,” said another. None of the people said that He was the Christ. Thus, after all His teaching, healing, travels, and wonders, He was told that the people did not think He was Jesus the Christ, but only such an One as the world had seen before. This was a great disappointment, and with downcast spirit Jesus began to wonder what His own disciples thought of Him, for He had never asked them the question. Looking earnestly at them with His clear dark eyes, He said—

“Whom do *you* say that I am?” The answer would either gladden or grieve Him. Peter saw the distress and disappointment of his young Master. The honest warm heart of the rugged fisherman had no doubt, and the enthusiasm of his heart leapt up to his lips in words of rare grandeur. Looking into the face of the downspirited young

Carpenter, whose father, whose mother, whose brothers and sisters he knew, who was clothed in a plain countryman's clothes like his own, and who was compelled by the Sadducees to leave His favourite town of Capernaum, he answered firmly—

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The words rejoiced the heart of Jesus.

“Blessed art thou, Peter,” He replied earnestly, “for no man hath told thee this, but My Father in Heaven.” When many people left Him at Capernaum, He had told His disciples that only the Spirit of God could draw men to Him, and now He said that Peter's belief was put into his heart by God's own Spirit. Still speaking to Peter, while the small band of disciples stood listening earnestly, Jesus went on to say—

“And I also tell thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. He felt that He had now good cause for confidence and joy. Peter had grasped the great truth of His life, *that the Spirit of the living God will come to men and dwell in them, and reveal the truth to them*, and He joyfully exclaimed that upon this great and blessed fact, as upon a rock, would rise a spiritual church, His Kingdom of Heaven in the world, into which no wickedness should come, for none should be in it but those who were brought thither by the Spirit's influence. Wicked persons may, and do become members of many churches by passing examinations and enrolling their names; but there is no test or certificate of entrance into His Kingdom, the spiritual church of Jesus, save the answer of a good conscience toward God. All are free to enter, poor or rich, and no human devices can put men in or keep men out, for the communications of the Spirit of God to man's spirit are revealed in secret, spirit answering to spirit, and the honesty of a man's goodness is known to God alone. And yet no words of Jesus have caused greater bitterness and want of charity among His followers by the imposition of checks and tests upon each other, trying to test that which cannot be tested, than those words to Peter.

He further said, "I will give thee the keys of Heaven, and whatever thou shalt bind or loose on earth shall be bound or loosed in Heaven." It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand these words. The Pharisaic teachers often spoke of binding and loosing people, but it is nowhere written that Peter ever exercised a power like this. Jesus did not tell him that he would have power to forgive men's sins. This was a power which Jesus very rarely exercised; and without words plainly saying so, it cannot be assumed that He gave such power to Peter, for we never read of Peter forgiving sins. Whatever power Jesus may have given Peter at this time, He did not tell him that He would be able to give it to others, not even to the other disciples. After these words to Peter, Jesus gave them all strict and earnest orders that they were not at present to tell any one that He was the Christ. Why He did so I cannot tell; possibly He wished to tell the people Himself in His own way.

Thou hast heard of the joy with which Jesus heard Peter say that He was "the Christ, the Son of God," for He knew that the Spirit of God had made it known to Peter. Thou, my child, must search thy heart, and find whether thou also canst give the same answer, which will mark thee as a little child of light, one of the children of His Kingdom of Heaven in the world.

GET THEE BEHIND ME, TEMPTER !

NEAR CÆSAREA PHILIPPI, SUMMER, A.D. 33.

Jesus was satisfied. Peter's answer that he believed He was the Christ, He accepted for all the disciples, for Peter was the eldest, and their steersman, leader, spokesman. But before they came down from the hill near Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus told them something which filled them with disappointment, wonder, and alarm. Hitherto He had taught them that He was Jesus, the Son of God from Heaven, the long expected

Christ, the hope of their nation ; but now, on this lonely hillside, far away from the people, He told them plainly for the first time the awful truth that He would be killed. He knew that the fierce hatred of the priests and Pharisees and Sadducees would end in His being put to death. And that His disciples might be prepared, and not scattered and put down when it happened, Jesus told them what would come, and that He had no fear of defeat, for His death would only make His victory greater. As these young men stood round Him, on the hillside, listening with sadness and perplexity in their faces, their native land spreading in beauty and sunshine before them, they heard Jesus say that after a short time they would go back to Jerusalem, that there He would suffer much from the head priests, Lawyers, and Sadducee Rulers, that they would reject Him, and put Him to death, and that in three days He would rise again.

The idea of Jesus, their Leader being killed, was most alarming to them all. Peter had just said that He was the Christ ! and the disciples believed, as all Jews had been taught to believe, that when the promised Christ came, He would be their King, forever, would sit upon Herod's throne of ivory and gold, wear his crown, and put down all enemies. But now He told them He would soon be killed. They could not believe it, for He had only lately been telling them, over and over again, how His great Kingdom of Heaven would spread quickly. They thought He was depressed and disappointed through the harsh treatment He had received and was quite mistaken in thinking any one would kill Him. But, when they came down from the hill and went again among the villages, Jesus spoke openly of His coming death, so that the people heard Him. Peter thought this very unwise, for he believed Jesus need not go to Jerusalem, unless He liked, and would not be killed even if He did go ; and he also believed that what his young Master required was to be thoroughly roused from His despondency, and encouraged by His disciples to look for the success of His Kingdom. Peter had just been told that he was favoured of God, and it made

him more confident, so he took Jesus by the hand and led Him aside from the people to a place where only the disciples could hear what he said to Him.

"Far be it from Thee, Master, this shall never happen to Thee," he exclaimed in a confident voice. He forgot in his enthusiasm and love for his young Master, that in this rash speech he was presuming to know more than Jesus. But Jesus turned upon him as he walked at His side, and answered him before all the other disciples in a tone which astonished them—

"Get thee behind Me, tempter!" He exclaimed. "Thou art a snare to Me, for thou dost not care for the things of God, but only for the things of men." Peter was thinking of a worldly kingdom, not of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Jesus called him a tempter!—adversary, for suggesting that He should avoid death. It was a severe reprimand to be told that in wishing Jesus to live and be a great world's King, Peter was not His friend, but His adversary. Calling the people to Him, Jesus spoke to them about the mistaken worldly spirit which Peter had shown, while the disciples stood by and listened. And as He spoke they heard Him say that they might banish all thoughts of rank, money, honour, power, in following Him, and that they must rather expect to be disliked and put down, and to hear the name of their young Master condemned, but that in Heaven they would be rewarded. They were to deny their own wishes and obey His, and He uttered a saying which should be remembered as a safeguard against the temptation to money-making in business, and love of wealth, which often grows on young people.

"If any man wisheth to follow Me," He said, "let him be self-denying in spirit and come after Me. *For, what shall a man profit if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Whoever shall save his life here, shall lose it in Heaven, and whoever shall lose his life here for My sake shall save it in Heaven. Whoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words at this wicked

time, of him shall I be ashamed when I come in the glory of My Father in Heaven and His holy angels, to reward every one according as he hath done good or bad." How beautifully does He bring in these shining ones, the angels, the friends of little children, with their white wings and lovely faces! And He finished with these strange words, which they could not understand—

"I tell you truly, some of them who stand here shall not die till they have seen the Kingdom of Heaven come with power." They would see men coming into His beautiful Kingdom of Heaven in the world, men who learned to know and obey God. But the disciples thought He meant a kingdom of armies, riches, and honours, like that of other kings.

I trust thou wilt never be ashamed of Jesus, but if thou shouldst ever feel tempted to think lightly or unlovingly of Him, or of what He said and did, remember His words, "Get thee behind Me, tempter!" for they will guard the purity of thy mind so that such thoughts may not return again.

HIS FACE DID SHINE AS THE SUN.

MOUNT HERMON, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

Jesus remained for a week among the villages near Cæsarea Philippi, seeing the villagers cutting down the ripe grain, and preparing their wine vats and olive presses for the fruit-gathering, which was now approaching, and then going further North, He came nearer to Mount Hermon, which is so very high that even in Summer it still keeps its white cap of snow. Again He wished to retire to a hill to pray, and this time He chose the slopes of Hermon. Telling the other disciples to wait for Him below, He took Peter and the brothers James and John up the mountain with Him. It was evening when they left the village, and as they climbed the slopes and terraces, they saw the red sun going down far over the Lebanon Hills; and the village looked like a small white speck in the valley below

They did not climb to the top of Hermon, but rested on one of the lower peaks, very high and bare, to stay there all night. Soon the growing shadows hid the lower world, blending trees and rocks in gloomy greyness, then darkness surrounded them, and they could no longer see to move about. On that high mountain they were far up in the air, and when the red planets and flashing stars came out in the deep blue sky, they seemed not only to have the stars above them, but all around them. As the night wore on, the flashing moon rose above the world, and passed into the sparkling skies until it hung a cold pure lamp over the mountain, and the Autumn wind blew chilly upon them. The disciples were not afraid, for they were men accustomed to the hills at night.

With sweet sensitiveness, Jesus withdrew a little way that He might pray unheard, save by His Father in Heaven, and the three disciples, wrapping themselves in their heavy cloaks, lay down to wait, and, wearied with their day's work, fell asleep. While they slept they had a vision. A change came over Jesus. As He prayed, His face shone like the sun, and His garments became white as dazzling snow, and two men in the glory of Heaven stood beside Him; Moses, the old prophet, who led the Jews out of Egypt, and who had been dead for fifteen hundred years, and Elijah, another old prophet, who was taken up into Heaven a thousand years before, neither of whom had ever been seen dead. The disciples awoke with a start, and were amazed to see a dazzling light surrounding Jesus and the two men. They listened and heard them talking of His death; and there upon that lonely mountain these three fishermen saw Jesus glorified. With eyes dazzled, they lay and watched and listened, but the time came when Moses and Elijah were about to go away, and Peter thought he should do something, and, rising from the ground, he went towards them, saying—

“Master, it is good for us to be here. If Thou wilt, I will make here three bowers of branches, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not think what he was saying, and it is difficult to know what use he intended to

make of the bowers. No one answered him, for, while he was speaking, a golden cloud, banishing the midnight darkness, came over them all, and they were covered with the brightness of its glory, and the disciples were afraid as they entered the cloud, and heard a voice from the midst of it, saying again what was said when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan—

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him.” They were greatly afraid, and Peter felt rebuked for his foolishness; for it was not a man’s voice that spoke, and they all fell to the ground and hid their faces from the glory which shone upon them, and lay there, not daring to rise or even to look up, till one of them felt a hand laid upon him, and a voice, which he knew to be the voice of Jesus.

“Rise, and be not afraid,” He said. And they looked up, expecting to have their eyes again pained and dazzled with the bright light, but the strangers and the golden cloud were gone, and they saw nothing between them and the silent stars but the figure of Jesus standing alone. They rose as He bade them, but it was some time before they recovered from their terror, and were able to talk with Him. They remained on the mountain till fringes of rose along the Eastern clouds told them that the day was breaking, and in the growing light of morning they went down the rugged hill-path, and, as they went, they talked about the wonderful vision of the night. But, as usual, Jesus told them they were not to speak of it to others.

“Tell the vision to no one,” He said, “until I am risen from the dead.” But talking among themselves, they asked each other what Jesus meant by “rising from the dead,” for this was the first time He had plainly spoken of such a thing, and it seemed to be quite opposed to what their early teachers had taught them, for they said that Elijah must come before The Christ and the rising from the dead, and they asked Him—

“Why do the teachers say that Elijah must first come?” To which He replied—

“Truly, Elijah should come to restore all things, but I tell you that he hath come, and is gone, and the people did not

know him, but did to him whatever they chose. And I also shall suffer many things, and be thought nothing of." The disciples then knew that when He spoke of Elijah coming, He meant John the Baptist, who had prepared the people for Jesus, and who was killed by King Antipas.

The pale morning light had grown into full day before they came down to the nine disciples, who were waiting on the vine-hung terraces below. They did not tell them of the vision of glory which they had seen on the mountain, while the others were asleep in the village; for, as Jesus had commanded them when descending the hill, Peter, James, and John told no one of it until their dear young Master was dead and risen again.

When thou seest a mist of gold upon the hills at evening, or gazest through the crimson clouds of sunset, that seem to hang like fiery curtains at the door of Heaven, remember the vision which scattered the darkness on that lonely mountain when Jesus was seen in His glory.

LORD, I BELIEVE.

CÆSAREAN VILLAGE, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

As Jesus and His three disciples walked towards the Cæsarean village to join the other disciples in the morning after the vision on Mount Hermon, they saw from a crowd of people that there was something wrong, and hastened on. As they approached, the people recognized Jesus, and came running to meet Him, exclaiming that they were glad He had come, for His disciples were in trouble. And when He came near, He found that among the people were some of His enemies the Lawyers, who were putting questions to the disciples which they were unable to answer. A boy, ill with epilepsy was there, and the Lawyers were upbraiding the disciples. And in this out-of-the-way village on that Autumn morning, once more Jesus met his old foes, and coming in between them and His disciples, He said in a quiet voice, turning to the Lawyers—

"What are you disputing about?" They scowled, but no one spoke. They were afraid to repeat what they had been saying. But a man in the crowd pushing forward, for he was the boy's father, said—

"Master, I brought my son to Thy disciples. He taketh fits and cannot speak, and when a fit is on him he falleth down and foameth at the mouth and grindeth his teeth, and he is pining away. And I asked Thy disciples to heal him, and they were not able." He had brought his son, expecting to find Jesus, and the disciples had tried to heal him, but had failed, and then the Lawyers had jeered at them. Jesus was grieved with all this, and exclaimed—

"O faithless people! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I have to bear with you! Bring the boy to Me." He had only been away from the disciples for one night, yet by talking among themselves, perhaps about His having said that He would soon be killed, these disciples had lost trust in Him. The boy, who had been taken out of the crowd, was now brought back by his father, and as he came he fell rolling on the ground, while the people stood looking at him in pity, for he was not yet twelve years old.

"How long is it since these fits began?" Jesus asked, turning to the father—

"Since he was a child," the man answered. "And often he hath fallen into the fire and often into water. Oh, *if* thou canst do anything, have pity on us and help us." The poor man had almost given up hope of having his son healed. But his words did not please Jesus.

"Why dost thou say, '*If* thou canst?'" Jesus asked him. "All things are possible to him that believeth." The man felt the reproof, and thinking Jesus might refuse to heal his poor boy, he cried out at once so loud that all the people heard him—

"Lord, I believe! Help thou mine unbelief!" And the people, hearing the cry, came running to the place where the poor boy lay on the ground. Speaking to the trouble, as though it were an evil spirit, Jesus said—

“Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of the boy, and return no more.” The boy gave a cry and lay so still that the people whispered to each other—“He is dead!” The Lawyers were the first to say so, and they said it with cruel satisfaction, thinking that Jesus had failed, but He paid no attention to them. Going over to the boy, He took his hand and raised him up, and gave him to his father well again. And all who saw it were astonished, for they felt that He had the power of God.

Leaving the crowd, Jesus went with His disciples to the house in which they lodged in the village for their morning meal, and the disciples wondered why they had not been able to heal the boy, although by a little reflection they might have remembered that they never thought they could do it. And as they were talking together in private of what had happened, they asked Jesus—

“Master, why could not we heal him?” His answer was the sharp reproof, which they deserved. Only a few months ago, He had sent them out to teach throughout Galilee with great powers, provided they believed in Him, but already they had lost trust, and did not pray to God.

“You failed,” Jesus said, “because you did not trust Me. For if you have trust as small as a grain of mustard seed, you could tell Mount Hermon to move to yonder place, and it would move, and nothing should be impossible to you. But,” He added, “this kind of trouble is only healed by prayer.” Now, when He said the disciples could move mountains, He was only using a common proverb of the people, which meant, not that they could shift mountains about, but that they could remove great difficulties. They should have known by this time, from the example of Jesus, to pray earnestly whenever they had any difficult thing to do; and their consciences told them that His answer was true—they had neither prayed nor trusted when with the boy, and they asked no more questions.

Thou wilt learn from this story not to say, “If thou canst,” when praying. God can do all things, and it is thy first duty

in prayer to believe that thy Father in Heaven can do what thou askest, for it is worse than foolishness to ask for a thing which thou dost not believe He can do for thee.

A CHILD IN THE MIDST.

CAPERNAUM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

Now we come to one of the loveliest pictures in the life of Jesus, and in the midst of it is a little child. It is still Autumn. The grass on the hillsides is scorched and dry, and the fruits are hanging ripe among the brown leaves in the orchards.

Having spent some more days among the villages at Hermon and Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus turned towards Galilee again. He knew that the Sadducees and Pharisees who had driven Him away would be watching for His return, yet He determined to go back, but to go quietly and privately. From the cool, breezy heights of Hermon they descended to the deep valley of the Jordan, and crossing it at a shallow place, they were soon again among the wooded hills and vales of Upper Galilee. Avoiding villages, for He did not wish it known that He was in Galilee, He took the lonely paths through the hills, spreading a tent and camping in the open air at night, and spending days in quiet places, for the weather was very warm. Though He did not teach the people on that journey, He taught His disciples much, telling them about His death, and preparing them for the time when they would be left without Him. He knew that when He got back to the crowded towns by the Lake-side He would be busy again, and would have few opportunities for speaking privately to them, and among the dark shadows of the silent and lonely hills He sought to impress upon them the certainty of His death. Over and over again He told them that He would be taken a prisoner and killed at Jerusalem, and would rise in three days. He wished them to give up thinking that He would ever be a King such as they thought ; and seeing His sad, earnest face, and hearing ever of His death, they were cast down : but they heard Him always say that in three days

He would rise again, and though they did not understand what He meant, and were afraid to ask what would happen when He rose, their hopes returned, and they fully believed that He would return alive to the world, and be their glorious King. They thought that the end of their work was drawing near, that soon they would get high places in His kingdom as rewards for their hard service—princes, nobles, governors, at least. And while Jesus tried to get them to believe that He was really to be killed and leave the world, they still looked eagerly forward to His death as the triumph of His work, and were already dividing the riches and honours which they expected to receive.

They passed quietly through Upper Galilee, with no crowds, no wonders, no teaching, only thirteen young countrymen, wearing heavy cloaks, and with long sticks in their hands, walking among the hills. And on the day when they came over the high road past Safed in the hills above Capernaum, and saw again the beautiful blue Lake sparkling in the sunlight like a silver mirror among the mountains, with the ranges of Hermon and of Moab beyond, and the rich crowded cities, and beautiful gardens so close at hand, the hopes of His disciples rose again. Jesus walked in front thinking of His coming death, but so little did they believe that He would be killed and leave them, that they actually began to quarrel angrily with each other as to who should be greatest when Jesus was King. Who doth not pity Jesus? How often were His sorrows deepened and His loneliness intensified by the secret disbelief, greed, vanity, and misunderstanding of His nearest friends! But He said nothing, and soon they were in Capernaum. Perhaps He came into the town at night, for He was not noticed for some days.

When He reached Peter's house some of the disciples came to Him, and He knew from their faces what they were thinking about; but they did not know what He had heard them saying on the road. Looking at them sadly, He surprised them with this simple question—

“What were you disputing about on the road?” But no one answered. The men were ashamed of what they had been saying; but they would confess nothing. Sitting down, which was His usual sign that He would speak for some time, Jesus told them to bring in the other disciples; and when they all stood before Him in the room, He said—

“Whoever wisheth to be the first, he shall be the last, and shall be the servant of all the others.” There were little dark-eyed children in the room, Peter’s children, who loved Jesus, and liked to hide in corners and watch Him and listen. They were sorry when He was away, and now on His return they gladly left their games to be near Him. Now Jesus loved little children more than anything else in the world, and calling a little one by his name, He bade him come, and the child ran joyfully across the floor and stood by His side, his little head not as high as Jesus’ shoulder. With kind words Jesus told him to stand out alone in the middle of the room, and the child did so. Then, turning to the disciples, who were looking on, He said—

“Unless you change, and become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever shall be humble as this little child,” pointing as He spoke to the blushing boy, “he shall be greatest in that Kingdom.” They all looked at the boy, as he stood in his small striped tunic, with bare legs and feet and hanging head, blushing and feeling very full of love to Jesus, trusting Him, and ready to run to Him when told. The child did not know what it all meant, but he knew that he would do anything for Jesus, and not feel proud at all; and before this innocent child these bearded men stood silent and reprovèd.

Again Jesus called the child, and he ran to Him, and hid his blushing face in His white tunic. Putting His arms round him as though both the child and He were giving the lesson to the hardy fishermen, He set the child down beside Him, his fair head touching the dark brown hair of Jesus, and and repeating part of what He had told them once before, He said—

"Whoever receiveth a little child in My name, receiveth Me, and whoever receiveth Me, receiveth God ; but whoever shall cause harm to one of these little ones that believeth on Me, it were better for that man that a millstone were hung round his neck and he were drowned in the sea." He then repeated to His disciples more of what He had told them before, saying that they should not hesitate to give up anything that caused them to do wrong, even to cutting off their hand, adding these beautiful words, as though He feared some of them did not yet think enough of the child now folded in His arms.

"See that you despise not little children, for I tell you that in Heaven their angels do always see the face of God, My Father in Heaven." These are beautiful words for children. Children are to be first, and always see God's face in Heaven, just as in their pure hearts they hear His voice on earth. Jesus then told them this story—

"If a shepherd should have an hundred sheep, and one of them should be lost, if he be a good shepherd he will leave the flock and search the hills and valleys until he find the wanderer, and when he findeth him he will rejoice more over finding the little lost one than over the ninety-nine other sheep which never were lost." Adding that children are God's little sheep, that Jesus Himself is the kind Shepherd who wants to lead them into Heaven, and that God does not wish a single child not to have Heaven. The disciples now confessed something they had done that day without His leave. It was John who spoke.

"Master, we saw a man healing people to-day in Thy name, and we forbad him, because he cometh not with us."

"Forbid him not," said Jesus, "for there is no man who doeth a good thing in My name who will ever speak lightly against Me. Whoever is not against us is for us. And whoever giveth you but a cup of cold water to drink because you are with Me, shall be rewarded." And after speaking to them of other things, He gave them a further warning against ever again disputing with each other, using the same words which He had used once before.

"Salt is good," He said, "but if the salt have lost its taste it is of no use. See that you are like good salt, and be at peace with each other." And still the little ruddy-cheeked child sat by Him, gazing up into His face with solemn dark eyes, forgetful of his games, of his companions, of the disciples, listening to every word of his dear Friend, and doubting nothing.

Remember thou how this little child taught these fishermen, for thou art not too young to show by thy gentleness, trust, and kindness, what like grown men should be. How did this child teach these men? Not by speaking, but by showing from a pure heart what perfect love and trust are.

FORGIVE THY BROTHER.

CAPERNAUM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

As some of His disciples might bear ill-will to each other after their recent dispute as to who should be the greatest, Jesus went on to tell them that they must forgive all injuries, and love each other like brothers. They were still in the small room of Peter's house, and His arm was round the child who sat beside Him, as He told them that they should love their brethren not only when they were kind, but also when they were unkind, and so win them back to kindness. The disciples were to behave to each other like brothers, for all men are brothers in God's great kingdom, and God is the Father of us all. But sometimes a brother harms another, and what is he to do then?

"If thy brother harm thee," said Jesus, "go secretly and tell him what he hath done, between thyself and him alone, and if he listeneth to thee and is sorry, then thou hast won thy brother again, and all is well. But if he will not speak with thee, then take one or two people with thee and try again, so that they may be able to say that thou didst try to make friends with thy brother. But if he shall still refuse to speak to thee, ask thy friends to speak to him; but if he will

not listen to them, or say he is sorry for what he hath done, thou needst do no more ; leave him alone." Thus Jesus wished His disciples not to quarrel, but if a quarrel should arise, they were to do all they could to be friends again. He was anxious that they should keep together, work and pray and worship together, saying to them also what He said to Peter when they were alone on the hill near Cæsarea Philippi, a few weeks before—

"What things you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and what things you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven. And if two of you agree upon anything that you shall ask in prayer, My Father in Heaven will do it for you. *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of you.*"

Thus He gave them a promise that when they met together to worship, His Spirit would be especially with them. Some of them thought that only in churches or in the Temple could they worship rightly, but He told them differently. In the lonely valley, on the storm-tost ship, or in the darkness of the mine, there the Spirit of God is with His worshippers, as much as in the quiet cathedral. With a desire for more guidance, Peter, who thought there must be some limit to forgiving one another, asked—

"Master, how often shall I forgive my brother? Is seven times enough?" Peter thought he was generous, for he had been taught, like all Jews, not to forgive even once, but to pay back injuries.

"I say," said Jesus firmly, "not seven times only, but seventy times seven shalt thou forgive thy brother!" meaning that there was to be no end to forgiving any one who was sorry for what he had done, for no one would think of keeping count of seventy times seven, which comes to four hundred and ninety times. He then told them a story about a king and his servants, to show how willingly God forgiveth us, and taketh us into His Kingdom of Heaven ; for the King in the story is God.

There was once a king who came to examine his servants, and one of them was brought who owed him ten thousand

talents of silver—now that is more than a million of English pounds—and as the servant had not got the money to pay him with, the king ordered him, his wife and children, and all that he had, to be sold. When the servant heard this order he fell down on his knees and worshipped the king, saying, “Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all that I owe thee.” And the king felt sorry for him, and forgave him the whole debt, and let him off free. After the king forgiving him so much, we should expect this man to forgive others gladly, but listen :—

When this servant went out from the king, he met another servant, who owed him one hundred pennies—now that is less than four English pounds, and he had owed the king a million pounds—and he took his fellow-servant by the throat before the other servants, saying, “Pay me what thou owest.” And the poor man fell down on his knees and begged of him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay thee.” But the servant would not, and had him put into prison till he should pay the debt. Now when the other servants saw what he had done to his fellow-servant, they were sorry and went and told the king, and the king sent for the cruel servant and said to him, “O thou wicked servant ! I forgave thee all thy large debt of ten thousand silver talents when thou didst ask me. Thou shouldst have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, as I had mercy on thee.” And the king was very angry, and gave the cruel man over to be punished till he should pay all that was due. And the disciples thought that the man was rightly punished by the king, who having had so much kindness shown to him, could be so very unkind to his companion ; forgetting that God is the king, who forgiveth us all so much, that we should gladly forgive each other ; but Jesus reminded the disciples of that in these beautiful warning words—

“And My Father in Heaven will do the same to you, if you do not everyone forgive your brother from your hearts.” And with this, Jesus ended the charming address which arose from the disciples quarrelling on the road to Capernaum, and they went out of the house resolving to obey His words. And the

little child, who had been in His arms all the while, ran out again into the sunshine with his companions, and he too understood that he was to be kind and gentle and loving to his little brothers.

And thou also wilt remember never to be tired of forgiving, and of being kind, and if thy brother will not listen to thee, then forgive him in thy kind little heart and think no more about it, and so thou wilt be like Jesus who forgave all His enemies.

THE TEMPLE SHEKEL.

CAPERNAUM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

Every man in the country where Jesus lived, who was twenty years of age had to pay a tax each year, called the "Temple Shekel," worth about 1s. 3d. Rich or poor, all had to pay it to the men who collected it for the priests at Jerusalem, who said it was paid to God, and that it helped to get the one who gave it into Heaven ; but really it was put into two great money boxes in the Golden Temple and spent upon sacrifices and upon the men and women about the Temple. It should have been paid in March, and it was now September, and when Peter returned to his house, the collector came asking for his half shekel, a small old silver coin, and at the same time he asked Peter if Jesus paid the tax, for there were some men who would rather go to prison than pay it. Peter, without asking Jesus, answered, "Yes," to the man, but he had not enough money to pay it with, and leaving him he went to tell Jesus that the collector had called. Perhaps Jesus had heard them talking at the door, for he said—

"Peter, from whom do the kings of the world ask taxes ; from their own sons, or from strangers ?"

"From strangers," Peter answered, for of course no king would think of taxing his own sons.

"The sons therefore go free," said Jesus, looking gently at Peter, who had been too hasty in telling the man that Jesus would pay the tax. Why should the Son of God pay a tax to

the Temple of God? Why should the pure and good One pay a tax to priests, to help Him to have Heaven? Some Teachers also, were not asked to pay this tax at all, and Peter was about to return and tell the man that He did not pay it, when Jesus added—

“But in case we should cause them to do wrong, go down to the Lake and cast a hook into the water and pull up the first fish which cometh, and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel; take that and give it to them for Me and thee.” Jesus knew that after what Peter had told the collector, he would press for the tax, which He had paid before when working as a Carpenter in Nazareth, it being one of many trifling customs which He obeyed although He did not defend them. We do not read of Peter fishing, but we hear no more of the collector or of the Temple tax, and conclude that he was paid.

The Festival of Bowers was now near, the most joyful Festival of all the year, the great glad harvest home kept by the whole nation in the Golden Temple at Jerusalem, to mark the ingathering of all the crops of the field—oil, wheat, barley, wine, dates, figs, pomegranates, flour, some of everything which they had got they brought to the Temple. It was a time of great rejoicing, particularly if the year had been a rich one, and all over the country the people gathered in bands to march up to Jerusalem, both for company and for safety, for sometimes robbers attacked them in lonely places. Capernaum was the gathering place for the Lake district, and as the people came in to the town from the plains and the hills, the brothers and sisters of Jesus came down by the vale of Doves from Nazareth. They were surprised to find that apparently Jesus was not going to the Festival. While they had cut new sticks, and mended their sandals, and put on their holiday clothes, He seemed to be making no preparations, and they began to talk to Him and give Him advice as to what He should do and how He should teach. They did not yet believe in Him, and it is very doubtful if they even loved Him, for they knew that His life would be in danger if He went to Jerusalem or Judæa,

and yet they pressed Him to go thither. Fresh from their sheep and vines, they sought out their elder Brother, whom the people thought so wise and great, to urge upon Him what to do at this critical time ; for, like His disciples, they hoped that if Jesus became a King, they would become great with Him. If He failed, He would be punished, but they His brothers would escape unnoticed and untouched, back to their sheep and their fields again.

“Leave Galilee and go into Judæa,” they urged Him, “that Thy followers there may also see the wonderful works which Thou doest. For no man who wisheth to become openly known doeth anything in secret.” Thus they advised Him to go into danger, for they thought little of any One who could do wonders, but who would not make a show of His power. “*If* Thou doest these things,” they added, “show Thyself to the world.” Jesus might have answered, “You, Mine own younger brothers ! who have known Me from childhood, whom I have carried, whose little feet I have taught to walk, whom I have never deceived, surely you believe in Me !” He did not answer angrily when they hinted that He was keeping out of the way, but gave a gentle reply with an edge of irony that must have touched their hearts. He told them that *they* were quite safe to go to Judæa, for they did not teach, but it was different with Him.

“It is not time for Me,” He said, “but you can go at any time. Those people do not hate you, but Me they hate, because I tell them that what they do is wicked. Go up to the Festival in Judæa ! I shall not go yet, for it is not My time.” They made no reply, for what He said of them was true, that they at any rate could not be accused of favouring or helping Him. And when the band of people left Capernaum to walk to Jerusalem, His brothers went with it, but Jesus remained behind with His disciples, and they thought that He was not going, and told all the people whom they met that He would not be at the Festival.

This is one of the saddest things in the life of Jesus—His

brothers—who had played and slept with Him, urging Him to go into danger. There are no words so bitter as the taunts of brothers, and if thou canst not help him, never, never do thy brother any harm.

THE FESTIVAL OF BOWERS.

JERUSALEM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

Jesus did not leave Capernaum till more than a week after His brothers had gone to attend the Festival of Bowers at Jerusalem, and then He followed with a few of His disciples, walking quietly and quickly, not teaching anywhere, for He did not wish it to become known that He would be at the Festival.

The Festival of Bowers was held at the time of the new moon in October, lasted for seven days, and was one of the three great Festivals to which everybody was expected to go, even women and children. For weeks before, on all the country roads, bands of people were marching towards Jerusalem, singing joyful psalms, while the children danced and waved green branches, the songs beginning low and growing louder as they all joined in, till they made the hills and valleys ring with their marching music. And when at last they reached the Mount of Olives, and saw on the other side of the Kedron valley the splendid city and the great Golden Temple, a shout of joy went up from each band as they came over the shoulder of Olivet, in which all the children joined, waving palm branches and shouting until the very soldiers in the watch-towers on the walls of Jerusalem heard them.

For weeks the city had been preparing for this joyful time of music, singing, dancing, illuminations, and feasting. It was the law that the people must all come out of their houses and live for a week in green bowers, built in the streets, squares, courts, gardens, and on the flat roofs of the houses, of great leafy branches — palm, olive, myrtle, pine, and willow branches—woven together, with red peaches, yellow citrons,

and purple grapes hanging among the twigs, to remind them of the time long ago when their forefathers lived in tents in the sandy desert and had no brick houses. The streets were decorated with branches of trees and flower stalls with fruits for sale, until with bower-building, pillar-twinning, arch-making, and ropes of leaves hung across from house to house, the streets looked like paths in a green forest; just as thou hast seen houses hung with evergreens and holly at Christmas time. The country people who came were taken in by their friends, until there was no more room in the city, and then they built their green bowers in the fields and on the hills outside, until the Mount of Olives and sides of the brook Kedron were covered with bowers, whence they could see the Golden Temple, high up on its rocky height, with the sunlight burning on its golden roof by day, and the moonlight flashing there by night.

The first day of the Festival began with silver trumpets blown from the white marble steps inside the Temple, and then the people, taking in their right hand a yellow citron, and in their left a bunch of palm, myrtle, and willow twigs tied together with a silver or gold cord, crowded to the "Water Gate" of the Temple that opened towards the Pool of Siloam in the valley of the Kedron, until every point of rock and hill at that part of the valley, on both sides, was covered with people. When the gate was opened, a procession, headed by a white-robed priest carrying a large golden bowl, came out to the sound of music and went down the long flight of steps cut out of the rocks that led to the sweet sparkling pool of Siloam, the favourite spring of Jerusalem. There he filled the golden bowl, and returned up the steps holding it on high, while all the people shook their green branches above their heads like a forest of waving boughs, and sang a beautiful song in which were these words—

"With joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation." And as the priest with the golden bowl entered the great court of the Temple, the Levites and the people that

crowded there, waved their green branches and sang this song to trumpets and harps—

“Oh give thanks to God, for His mercy endureth for ever.” The musicians continued playing loudly on trumpet, harp, flute, cymbal, and drum, and the whole place was filled with music, as the priest went from court to higher court of the great Temple towards the large stone altar in the third court, over which had been erected a bower of green willow branches from Motza on the Kedron, and there, high above the dense throng of thousands of people that stood in the hot sunshine, he poured water from the golden bowl into a silver basin, and wine into another silver basin, mingling them together, while all the people shouted joyfully. Then, led by a choir of Levites and singing boys, the people sang a grand psalm to the accompaniment of flutes only; and soon a grey cloud of smoke rising into the blue air over the Temple told the whole city that the morning sacrifice was being offered on the great altar.

This ceremony of water-carrying was one of the two great sights of the Festival, and it was repeated every morning for seven days. All day long, the people in their holiday clothes, carrying their bunches of green twigs, and their yellow citrons, walked through the streets and up the broad steps of the Temple, and round the great green-covered altar, waving their branches, and shouting “Hosanna, Hosanna!” which means, “Praise be to God!” And all day the priests performed in their court, and the singers and musicians played and sang, the silver trumpets being blown twenty-one times that day from the marble steps of the Women’s court.

Jesus did not find fault with these great Festival rejoicings, but went to them as He went to the marriage at Cana, to look on; nor wilt thou judge any one harshly, for the spirit of Jesus liveth in different manners of worship, and He loveth a gentle judgment.

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE.

JERUSALEM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

At night came the strangest scene of all in the first great day of the Festival of Bowers at Jerusalem. In the large square of the Women's court, which stood high above the city, and was paved with many coloured marbles, and was open to the blue skies, the young priests had prepared and placed upon the lofty walls four immense golden candlesticks, with great candles in them, and also four huge golden lamps full of oil, with wicks made out of the old garments of the priests. At sundown the people crowded into that court, the women going up into the dim stone galleries round about to look down from the windows, and when it grew dark, four young priests went up ladders to the huge candles and lamps upon the wall and set them on fire, and soon the flames rose and flared over the Temple walls, lighting up carved arches, galleries, pillars of marble, and doors of plated brass and gold.

Then, with lighted torches in their hands, the chief men of the city—Teachers, Lawyers, Priests, Rulers—with dusky faces and robes of flowing white, going out into the middle of the court, began dancing with naked feet upon the coloured pavement under these wild flaring lights, while the singers and musicians seated on the fifteen great steps of the court, with silver trumpets, flutes, cymbals, and drums, played and sang wild and exciting music to the strange dancing, and the women looked down upon a scene in which they were not allowed to mingle. The lights were so great and high that they lighted up all the streets of the city below; but, nevertheless, the people illuminated their houses with candles in the windows, and walked about with lighted torches in their hands until far into the night, and when the time of cock-crowing came in the morning, two trumpeters went through the dancers in the Temple, sounding their silver trumpets, which was the signal for the dancing to cease, the lights to be put out, and the Temple doors to be shut. These Temple lights were the

second great sight of the Festival, and they were kindled every night for seven nights.

Three days of the Festival went past, but there was no Jesus. Where was He? The head priests looked for Him among the people when the Festival began, but He was not there. "Where is Jesus?" the people asked; but no one could tell. His brothers said He was not coming to the Festival. Yet all the people were talking about Him because of His wonders, but only in whispers, being afraid lest they might be taken for His friends and punished; and while some said Jesus was a good man, others denied it, and said He was leading the people astray.

Crossing the Jordan at the Fords, to which He had come from the borders of Samaria, Jesus walked along by the river's Eastern side, and re-crossing it again, came up the steep Jericho road to the Mount of Olives, and was in Jerusalem before the priests knew. Suddenly, on the fourth day of the Festival, He appeared in the Temple, standing among His disciples, quietly teaching the people in one of the side arches of the Women's court, where the Teachers usually stood, and at once He was recognised as the young Carpenter of Nazareth, and the people crowded to hear Him. Hearing that He was there, the chief men of the Temple came from the Priest's court to listen, and when they heard His wonderful teaching, they looked at each other in surprise.

"How doth this Man know so much," they asked, "having never been in our schools or colleges?"

"What I teach," Jesus replied, "is not Mine own, but God's who sent Me. Any man who wisheth to obey God knoweth whether My teaching is from God or whether I speak from Myself. Whoever speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory; but He that seeketh the glory of God who sent Him, He is true, and there is no wickedness in Him. Moses gave you the law, yet none of you keep it." Then, with sudden energy, He exclaimed, "*Why do you wish to kill Me?*" Now, while the common people knew that the priests hated Jesus, they did not all know that they wished to kill Him, and some

of them answered, repeating the coarse taunt which the Pharisees had taught them—

“Who wisheth to kill Thee? Thou hast an evil spirit!” This wicked saying, which had been flung at Him before by the Pharisees in Galilee, deeply grieved Jesus; but He took no notice of it.

“I healed people on the Sabbath,” He continued, “and you were angry; but on the Sabbath you work in this Temple for the good of men, because Moses told you. Now, if you may do so, why are you angry with Me because I made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath? Do not judge by appearances, but judge righteously.” He wished them to be just and fair, and not to seek to kill Him because he had healed the poor man on the Sabbath, at the Pool of Bethesda, on His last visit to Jerusalem.

Now, when the news of His coming and what He had said spread through the city, all the people talked about Him, and it got to be generally known that the priests wished to kill Him, one saying to another, as they looked at Him when He came day after day and taught fearlessly in the Temple—

“Is not this the young Man from Galilee whom they are seeking to kill, and yet He speaketh openly, and they say nothing to Him?” To which others replied—

“Perhaps they know that He is the Christ. But others said—

“No. We know that this Man cometh from Nazareth; but we have been taught that when the Christ cometh no one shall know whence He shall come.” But in this they had been taught wrongly. And so they refused to believe what Jesus said, not because He did not speak the truth, but because they knew whence He came. It is not likely that He went to see the wild dancing of His chief enemies in the Temple at night. He would sit rather talking with His friends in a green bower on the side of the Mount of Olives, looking at the huge wild flames that waved over the Temple walls, as they kindled with red flare on tower and terrace, and threw dark shadows into the Kedron valley, while the

moon in silvery splendour hung above the Mount, pouring her pure rays through the leaves of His bower to fall like arrows of light around Him.

And thou wilt remember what Jesus said to these people in the Temple, that any one who wished to be good and obey God would know that His teaching is from God, and thou, too, wilt find that to know Him is better than the learning of all schools and colleges.

SOLDIERS REFUSE TO TAKE HIM.

JERUSALEM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

The Festival of Bowers was nearly over. Every day brought waving branches and silver trumpets, and every night more lighted torches and dancing, and Jesus taught daily in the marble porches of the Temple to the crowds who thronged among the pillars. Now, He sat upon a Teacher's wooden bench in the shade of the outer arches, speaking quietly to those who stood around Him; now, He stood, in His white tunic, at the foot of a great marble pillar in a porch, addressing the ever-moving crowds from all parts of the country, that, coming up the steps from the city, thronged through the pillared entrance and out into the first great open court. The people were divided, some for, some against Him; and while all agreed that they had never heard such speaking at a Festival, some objected, because they knew Jesus, and that He came from Galilee, and to these He replied—

“You know Me, and whence I came? I came, not of Myself, but God sent Me, and He is true, and Him you do not know. I know God, because I came from Him.” When the chief Jews heard Him say this, they were very angry, and resolved that He should be taken a prisoner; yet they did not do it, fearing a riot, for they saw that He was winning the common people to His side, many of whom were inclined to think that He was indeed the Christ, notwithstanding what their own Teachers said against Him.

“When the Christ cometh,” they asked each other, “will

He do more wonders than this man hath done?" This alarmed the head priests. That the people should speak openly in this way of Jesus being the Christ, in the very Temple, and of One against whom they had warned them, was, they thought, a very serious danger. And they called a meeting of the Temple council of the priests, treasurers, and rulers, in the Hall of hewn stones, at the corner of the Priests' court, and told them what the people were saying, and the council resolved that Jesus should be at once taken a prisoner; and calling in the officers of the Temple guard, they ordered them to go down and take Him, but to do it quietly. The officers went through the people to the place where He was speaking, and stood listening, waiting until a suitable time came to take Him quietly.

"I shall be with you only a little while longer," Jesus said, "and then I will go to God who sent Me. You shall seek Me, but shall not find Me; for whither I go you cannot come." The officers were astonished at His speaking and His appearance, as He stood in His white countryman's dress, young, fearless, strong, His clear dark eyes looking calmly upon the crowd; and the priests, thrown into a flutter with His last words, said to each other—

"Whither will He go that we shall not find Him. Will He go to the Jews that are in strange countries, and teach strangers? What doth He mean?" And that day went past, and the officers did not try to take Him.

The next was the eighth and last day of the Festival, the day when the people shook the withered leaves from their willow twigs round the altar, and beat their feathery palm branches to pieces against its rough stones, when the willows over it and the green bowers in garden and court were pulled down and scattered, and the people returned to their houses. On that morning there was no joyous bringing of water in the golden bowl from Siloam, and that night there were no great lights in the Temple. All was dark there. Everybody missed these things, for it was a proverb among the people that whoever had not seen the bringing in of the water, or the kindling of the

lights at this Festival, did not know what joy was. And Jesus called loudly to the people in the Temple—

“If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink, for whoever believeth in Me” (as the Bible saith)

“He shall be like a watered garden.”

“And like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”

The same as He told the woman at the well of Sychar about two years before, that the Spirit of God would spring up within them. But His words caused a fresh stir among the people, some saying firmly—

“This truly is the Prophet! This is the Christ!” Others, who were doubtful, said, “What? Can the Christ come from Galilee? Doth not the Bible say that He shall come from the children of King David, and from Bethlehem, the village where King David was born?” They did not know that although Jesus had lived almost all His life in Nazareth, He was born in this very Bethlehem. The people were thus more and more divided.

But the Temple council sent the officers again, this time with soldiers, to take Jesus, and they came to the court where He was teaching, but again they stood listening, as much interested as any in the crowd, until, what with the temper of the people and their own changed feelings, the soldiers resolved that they would rather disobey the council than touch Him. And when He ceased speaking the officers returned to the council, who were waiting in their splendid Hall of hewn stones, with windows that looked down into the courts. They had been watching and fretting, while the soldiers stood listening to Jesus, and were amazed that they had not brought Him up a prisoner.

“Why did you not bring Him?” they demanded angrily. The soldiers’ answer was short and true—

“No man ever spoke like this Man!” They would not touch Him. The priests were enraged. Not only had Jesus won the people, but He had disarmed their own paid soldiers. Glaring upon the firm, dark-faced men, who did not fear them, they exclaimed—

“Have you also been deceived? Have any of the Rulers or Pharisees believed on Him? These people who know not the law are accursed!” But the soldiers stood silent while the priests cursed them and the common people. Nicodemus, the friend of Jesus, was a member of this highest council, and he could not remain silent and hear it said that no Ruler believed in Him, and he was ashamed that the council should blame Jesus contrary to their own rules.

“By our law,” Nicodemus said gravely, “we do not judge a man until we have heard him and know what he doeth.” But the other councillors turned upon Nicodemus, as they had done upon the soldiers, saying with a sneer—

“Art thou from Galilee? Search the Bible, and thou wilt see that no prophet cometh from Galilee.” They taunted Nicodemus with being a Galilean, and therefore a friend of Jesus. And the council meeting broke up in disorder, without settling anything, every one going home. But Jesus continued teaching that day in the Temple, while many of the people believed Him, and many did not; and in the evening He went out and lived among the friendly Galileans camped on the Mount of Olives.

The friendship of Nicodemus is a bright spot in that dark meeting of the chief council, and when thou art tempted to be silent while those around thee are speaking against Jesus, remember Nicodemus, who spoke for Him, when the leading Jews were against Him.

THE LIGHT OF LIFE.

JERUSALEM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

Jesus did not leave Jerusalem when the Festival of Bowers was over, but returned early next morning to the Temple, to teach. Perhaps He did not know that the soldiers had been ordered to take Him a prisoner, although He knew that His enemies wished to kill Him. Gathering the people round Him, He began to speak to them as though He were in no danger. The Lawyers and Pharisees finding Him there again,

and having failed with the soldiers, tried another way to get Him into their power.

As He sat quietly speaking in one of the wide stone arches that looked out upon the beautiful pavement of the Women's court, He heard a noise of exclamations and excited voices in the crowd, and saw the people open up a way to allow certain Lawyers and Pharisees to pass through towards Him. They were compelling some one to come along with them, a poor trembling woman, whom their servants pushed forward until she stood with disordered clothes and loose hair before Jesus, for she had been forced into the Temple. What did this interruption mean? This trembling woman? These girdled priests in their long robes of white shining linen? One of the Lawyers, in a voice of mock respect, pointing to the woman, whose head was bowed with shame, said to Jesus—

“Master, this woman hath been taken in wickedness. Now, by the law of Moses, we are told to stone her; but what dost Thou say?” Jesus saw their plot. He was known to have taught strange and new things about the rights of women, and to be their friend; and these Pharisees thought that if He were now to say, “Stone her,” the people would cry out against His harshness, and if He should say, “Let her go,” then the Pharisees would blame Him for teaching things different from the laws of the great Moses. But Jesus knew that killing people in this way had long since been put down by their Roman conquerors, and He also knew that some of the chief Jews were very wicked men. He was sorry for the woman, and was shocked that these men should drag her out thus before all the people, not because of her degrading fault, but only that they might use her against Him. The whole thing was so revolting, cruel, and heartless, that He would not answer the Lawyer's question. He had before refused to act as a judge between people, and He would not even look at these pompous hypocrites as they stood before Him with their long robes and staring phylacteries on arm and brow; and stooping down He began to write on the marble pavement with His finger; a sign that He would not speak to them.

Thinking that He was perplexed, the Lawyer urged Him to answer his question, while his richly dressed friends stood in a group behind him, the people with their dark eyes and earnest faces standing silently round to see what would happen. The woman was now almost forgotten in the struggle that was going on between Jesus and His enemies, till, pausing in His writing, He raised His head, and looking at the group of Pharisees with eyes that made them shrink with their stern calmness, He said slowly—

“Whoever is free from wickedness among you, let him cast the first stone at her.” And again Jesus bent down and resumed writing with His finger on the pavement. The poor woman thought that these cruel men would certainly stone her; but at first the Pharisees did not quite understand Him, and in the silence which followed, no one touched her. The crowd thought that among these fine dressed men there would surely be *one* who was not wicked; but the Pharisees knew better. First one of the older Pharisees turned and moved away; then another followed him without a word, and then another and another, until they were all gone, leaving only one who might have gone but did not go—the poor woman. She stood motionless, her heart filled with gratitude and thanks to Jesus her Friend. The people waited, watching in silence this strange scene, but Jesus still wrote on. At length He raised His head again and looked to the place where the Pharisees had been; but they were gone.

“Woman,” He said gently, turning to her, “Where are they? Did no one condemn thee?”

“No one, Lord,” was her low reply, speaking for the first time, and hoping that He might forgive her great fault.

“Neither do I condemn thee,” He said. “Go away, and be wicked no more.” He forgave, but He also warned her, as He sent her away. With a full heart she left the Temple, and went down to her humble dwelling in the town, to tell her friends what Jesus had done for her, and the people were astonished and delighted with His wisdom and gentleness. And so the Pharisees were again defeated and put to shame in the Temple.

But Jesus remained teaching in the Treasury, where the money chests were, at the end of the Women's court, and at a later part of the day, Pharisees, priests, soldiers, common people, and disciples were again there, listening to Him as He sat on a raised portion of the red marble pavement in the open arch between the pillars. He had spoken yesterday of one of the two great sights of the festival, the joyous bringing of the water in a golden bowl with singing and music into the Temple; and to-day He referred to the other, the great light which had been kindled above the very court in which He sat, and which had lit up the whole Temple, city, valley, and hills around. The people could see above them on the walls, the half-burnt candles sticking still in the huge gold candlesticks, and the marks where the melted wax had run down, and the great empty basins of the golden lamps with the traces of oil, flame, and smoke about them; but the lights were gone; there was nothing left but burnt wicks, grease, and soot; and they would not be lighted again for another year. The recollection of the light which these great flames had cast over the city was fresh in every mind, as Jesus exclaimed—

"I am the Light of the world. Whoever followeth Me shall not live in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life." What a beautiful thing to say! That to have the Spirit of Jesus is to have a light to guide our lives. But some Pharisees who had not been among those who had brought the poor woman, interrupted Him rudely, saying—

"Thou speakest about Thyself. What Thou sayest is not true."

"If I speak about Myself," He replied quietly, "what I say is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go, but you do not know. You condemn Me as men judge each other. I judge no man; but if I were to judge, My judgment would be right, for I am not alone in what I do, but My Father who sent Me is with Me."

"Where is Thy Father?" interrupted some one, thinking to catch Jesus by demanding to see His Father.

"You do not understand Me," was His quiet reply; "nor

do you know My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also." Now, God was the Father of whom He spoke ; but they pretended to think He was speaking of His father Joseph ; but He did not answer them any more at this time. And when He stopped teaching, and went away from the Treasury, although the chief Jews wished very much to take Him a prisoner, yet they were afraid to touch Him, for the people liked Him so much.

Now, before thou dost blame any one for wickedness, remember thine own faults, and it will make thee gentle in thy judgments ; for although Jesus might have treated the poor, sinful woman severely, He forgave her and spoke kindly to her.

THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.

JERUSALEM, AUTUMN, A.D. 33.

Although Jesus had come away from the Treasury in the Women's court, He did not leave the Temple, but later still in the day He taught again in one of the porches of the great outer court, where the people in their strange bright dresses, men, women, and children, were going out and in to the Temple, through the splendid gates. Again the Pharisees were there listening to Him, for they always had some one to watch what He said to the people. Young, beautiful, fearless, it made no difference to Him, as He stood in His white tunic among the rows of marble pillars.

"I shall go away," He said, speaking of His death, "and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your wickedness, for you cannot come to the place whither I go." When the Pharisees heard Him say this again, fearing He would get out of their power, they whispered to each other—

"Whither is He going? Will He kill Himself? for He saith He is going to a place whither we cannot follow Him."

"You came from below," Jesus continued ; "I come from above ; you belong to this world, but I do not, and so I said that you shall die in your wickedness ; for unless you believe

that I am He, you shall so die." But some one in the crowd called out—

"Who art Thou?" Jesus replied by asking them to think of all He had said and done, saying—

"I am what I have said from the beginning, and I have many things to tell you. God who sent Me is true, and what I have heard from Him I speak to you. When you have killed Me, you will know that I am the Christ, and that I do nothing of Myself, but, as God My Father hath taught Me, so do I speak to you. *God who sent Me is with Me now.* He doth not leave Me alone, for I always do the things which please Him." These words of Jesus were more than usually earnest and touching. No one could deny it when He said that all He did was good; and this was so conclusive of His being the Christ, that a large number of the people who listened, called aloud to Him that they believed Him, and among them were a few of the leading Judæans.

"If you continue to believe," Jesus replied, turning with a glad look to these new friends, "then are you truly My followers, and you shall know the truth, *and the Truth shall make you free,*" meaning that they would receive His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

"We are Abraham's children," replied one of the other Judæans, "and have never been slaves to any one. How canst Thou say that we shall be made free?" They did not understand that Jesus meant freedom from wickedness.

"Every one," He replied, "who doeth wickedness is the slave of wickedness; but if I make you free from wickedness you shall be free indeed. I know that you all are Jews and children of Abraham, yet you wish to kill Me because you do not believe My words. I speak what I have learnt from My Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

"Abraham is our father!" again exclaimed some one, meaning that they were all descendants of Abraham, a great Jew who lived a thousand years before.

"If you were true children of Abraham," Jesus replied, looking at the man who interrupted Him, "you would do

the good things that Abraham did, but instead of that, you wish to kill Me, a Man that hath told you the truth which I have heard from God. Abraham would not have done so. But you do the deeds of your father." His words made them angry ; they did not understand Him. Who did He mean was their "father?" and some one exclaimed—

"God is the Father of us all."

"If God were your Father," Jesus replied quickly, "you would love Me, for I come from God. I have not come by Myself, but God sent Me. You do not understand Me, because you will not believe what I say." He was roused against these wicked men, who claimed that they were sons of God, equal with Him, and, turning to the listening people, He fearlessly went on to tell them that their Teachers were followers of the spirit of evil—

"Your father is the spirit of evil," He said, "and you do what he wishes. He was a murderer from the beginning, and careth not for the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh what is his own, for the spirit of evil is a liar and the father of all lies. And because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me." And then He calmly asked them this amazing question—

"Which of you can say that I have done any wicked thing?" He paused. Here was a challenge made in their own Temple, to all the priests and Pharisees who had watched him almost daily for the last two years : a challenge to name one wicked thing that He had done in all His life. No man in the world's history has given, could truthfully give, such a challenge. Jesus waited ; his enemies stood silent ; the people looked on in wonder and awe, as they compared the calm, beautiful face of this strong young countryman, with the scowling confusion of the Pharisees. Turning away from His cowardly enemies, Jesus resumed, with a ring of victory in His voice—

"Since I speak the truth, why do you not believe Me? Whoever is a child of God, believeth the words of God, and that is why you do not believe My words, for you are not

children of God." These words made the chief Judæans so angry that they shouted again their old lying insult, now so plainly false, with another insult added to it—

"Thou hast an evil spirit in Thee, Thou art a Samaritan!" They meant that He hated the Judæans, and was full of wickedness; shocking words from men who only a few moments before could not name one wicked thing that Jesus had done. Sad and pathetic was His reply to this shameful taunt, a taunt too vile, too like common brawling for priests to use in their place of worship—

"I have no evil spirit," Jesus replied, "but I honour God, and you do dishonour Me. I do not seek Mine own glory; but there is One who seeketh and who judgeth—God. If a man obey My words, he shall never see death." Now, they thought, we have caught Him at last, for they did not know Jesus meant that all who had His Spirit would have Heaven—an endless life of perfect union with God.

"Now we are sure that Thou hast an evil spirit," they exclaimed with a shout of satisfaction. "Abraham is dead, the prophets are dead, and yet Thou sayest that If a man obey Thy words he shall never die! Art Thou greater than Abraham—greater than these other good men who are all dead? Whom dost thou make Thyself out to be?" They hoped to press Him into saying something about Abraham, whom the people revered greatly, which would set them against Jesus; and in this last trick they partly succeeded.

"If I were to praise Myself," He replied, "My praise would be nothing. It is God who glorifieth Me, and you say that He is your God, although you have never known Him. I know God, and if I were to say I do not know Him I should be a liar, like yourselves; but I know God and obey His words. Abraham rejoiced to see Me, and he saw Me and was glad." Again the chief Judæans interrupted Him. Thinking only of His life on earth, they exclaimed with a shout of contemptuous rage—

"Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?"

One against hundreds. This word-battle of Truth against falsehood, of the Spirit against wickedness, had to be fought out to the end, and many who heard, never forgot it. Jesus now came to His last reply. They had put the question, and He would fearlessly give them the answer. Standing there, a young beautiful Countryman, in the finest Temple in the world, looking calmly at the old mistaken Teachers of the people, He, not yet thirty-three years old, speaking of Abraham who had been dead for more than a thousand years!—As He reflected upon the Spirit of God which was in Him, He replied calmly—

“I tell you truly, before Abraham was, *I am.*”

The dispute had now got beyond words. The people thought Jesus had said something against Abraham. Leading them on with wild gestures, the chief Judæans, calling “Stones! stones!” rushed out of the court to a part of the Temple which was still building, for in their rage they intended to stone Him to death. But Jesus went away and hid Himself, leaving the Temple, perhaps hurried out into the town by His friends, so that when the enraged people returned He was gone.

And so amid shouts and confusion ended His last teaching in the Temple at this time, a teaching that closed with a controversy and a challenge which spread far and wide, and which the chief Judæans never forgot, for He had said that they were liars, and followers of the spirit of evil.

And thou wilt not forget how Jesus, standing among the marble pillars, looking out upon the crowds who listened in the court outside, standing among people who had known Him all His life—He, so pure, so gentle, so sensitive to every form of wickedness,—challenged them to name one wicked thing that He had done, and even His enemies could not do it.

And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His alone.

FAREWELL TO GALILEE.

GALILEE, WINTER, A.D. 33.

The news of the great dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees spread over Jerusalem, and He did not go back to the Temple, but left the city and returned to Galilee. He went to Capernaum, where those who had left Jerusalem before Him had told the people all about His sudden appearance at the Festival of Bowers, and what He had said and done there: and when He came back to the Lake-side, His friends gathered round Him, for some did not expect ever to see Him again.

He resolved to rouse the country once more before returning to Jerusalem, for He had determined to go back and attend the very next Festival, called the Festival of Dedication, which would be in about seven weeks' time. Choosing seventy of His friends, He prepared them, as He had done the disciples a year before, to go out in pairs through all the towns and villages of Galilee and Judæa also, into which He was about to go. Calling them together, He spoke to them in much the same words: warning and encouraging them, and this is part of what He said—

There is much to do, and there are few people to do it; pray to My Father in Heaven that He may send more helpers. I send you out like lambs among wolves. Take no purse, nor bag of bread, nor spare shoes, and greet no man on the road. When you go into a house, say, 'Peace be to this house,' and if a good man be there, that house shall have peace, but if not, then your peace shall return to you. Stay in the same house eating and drinking what they give you, for you deserve your food, but go not from one house to another. And into whatever city you go, and they welcome you, eat what they give you, and heal the sick that are there, and teach, saying, '*The Kingdom of Heaven is near!*' But if you come to a city and they will not welcome you, go through the streets and say, wiping your feet, as you leave it, 'The dust of your city that sticketh to our feet, we wipe off against you, nevertheless

know this, that the Kingdom of Heaven hath come near you.' It shall be better for Sodom than for that city. Nowadays ministers are paid for their work, but these seventy men were to get no money, only food and shelter.

As Jesus spoke of teaching and healing, He thought of what He had done in the many towns that were crowded round the warm Western shores of that beautiful Lake, which He was now about to leave never to return, and remembering the large towns which He had seen on His long journey through Phœnicia, He exclaimed in words almost the same as He had used before when returning to the Lake from a journey among the villages of Galilee—

“Woe to thee ! Chorazin and Bethsaida, cities by the Lake, for if I had done in Tyre and Sidon by the sea, the things which I have done in you, they would long ago have mourned for their wickedness. It shall be better for them than for you. And thou, Capernaum ! shalt thou be raised up ? Thou shalt be brought low. If I had done the things in Sodom which I have done in thee, Sodom would not have been destroyed. It shall be better for Sodom than for thee.” Turning again to the seventy men, He gave them these last parting words of encouragement : “Whoever listeneth to you, listeneth to Me, for you speak My words ; he that rejecteth you, rejecteth Me, for I have sent you out to teach, and whoever rejecteth Me, rejecteth God, for He sent Me.” And thus these seventy men were sent out two by two, taking the brief message of Heaven through the highways and lanes and valleys, over hills and rivers and into every city and village, pondering as they went the saying of Jesus, that whoever received His words, received His Spirit.

Having thus sent out these men to prepare the people, Jesus remained some days longer, and then bidding a last farewell to His friends at the Lake-side, He started with all His disciples to go slowly and publicly on His fourth and last journey through Galilee, back towards Jerusalem, to attend the great December Festival of Dedication. It was the beginning of Winter, and cold up among the hills.

The fields were bare and brown, the last of the purple grapes and the dark green olives had been gathered and crushed, and the trees, shaken with the wind, had cast their red leaves upon the ground, while in the wooded clefts of the hills, the streams, swollen with rain, foamed and sparkled down to the Jordan, that plunged and wound through its deep gorge of rocks. From the white shores of the plain of Gennesaret Jesus and His friends climbed to the hills, pausing to look for the last time on the blue mirror of the beautiful Lake, with its undulating margins of white beach, dipping bushes, black rocks, and steep cliffs hung with trees, all set like a deep cup, amid the surrounding hills that rose ever higher towards the snow-clad Mount Hermon—one last look—and then the picture was shut out from view. Passing round the foot of Mount Tabor, with its thickly wooded top, Jesus went down to the level plains of Endor and Esdraelon, where there were broad rivers and numerous marshy streams to cross, that watered these rich lands, and hundreds of villages which the seventy men had prepared for His coming. After spending days, perhaps weeks, among these villages, He climbed the high range of the Carmel hills, whence, looking across the rich plain of Esdraelon to the wooded hills of Nazareth, He took His last farewell of His beloved Galilee, intending to go through Samaria by the most direct road to Jerusalem.

Now the Judæans and the Samaritans hated each other so much that many Judæans would not go across Samaria, and the Samaritans liked to annoy the Judæans and Galileans by turning them back, particularly if they thought they were going to a Festival. But Jesus did not care for these foolish enmities. He had come back from the Pass-over Festival two years ago, through Samaria to Galilee, and was very kindly received, and, as He had done during the rest of His journey, He sent two men on before Him, most likely two of the seventy men, to a village a little way into the country of Samaria to prepare things for His coming, for He intended to stay the night there. It was toward evening when the men reached the village, and going to the inn for strangers,

they asked them to make ready for Jesus and His friends. The men were asked questions as to who Jesus was, and whither He was going, and hearing that they were Galileans going to a Festival in Jerusalem, the people refused to take them in. When the two men brought this message to Jesus, He did not turn back, but went on towards the village, and the villagers came out in their strange dresses, with yelping dogs and long sticks to meet Him, and, standing on the road, they said, with threatening gestures, that He was not to come into their village.

Jesus heard them calmly, but not so His disciples, who were very angry that these great little-nobodies should refuse Jesus that common hospitality which was always shown to travellers. They had read in the Bible, that long ago, in that very country, a prophet had called down fire from Heaven upon a captain and his soldiers who had come from a wicked king; and His cousins, James and John, going up to Jesus, exclaimed with suppressed rage as they pointed eagerly at the villagers—

“Lord! shall we call down fire from the skies and burn them up?” Jesus, who had been speaking to the villagers, turned round and rebuked the cruelty of His cousins. He had not given them their great powers that they might kill foolish people who resisted them.

“You do not understand,” He said, “what kind of spirit you are of. I came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” And, tired as He was, He turned back and left the place, walking to another Samaritan village, where they were received kindly, and stayed the night. But He was obliged to change His road after this, and instead of going through that country, He went down by the side of Samaria, intending to cross the Jordan into the Peræan country. And so, because of the folly of these villagers, the Samaritans did not see Jesus on His last journey; but although they did this to Him, He always spoke kindly of them.

Learn from this story the wickedness of giving way to sudden anger; and that great power must be used with great

wisdom. James and John wished to kill these villagers with fire for not welcoming Jesus, but He saw in it nothing grand and fine, only wicked cruelty ; and told them that they did not yet understand His Spirit, which is the spirit of gentleness and forbearance.

TEN LEPERS.

SAMARIA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

After staying a night in the Samaritan village, Jesus and His friends went their way, going slowly towards Jerusalem. The road from the hills to the valley of the Jordan passed along the borders of Samaria, and was one often taken by travellers on the way to Jerusalem. It led down through rugged clefts in the hills, where the Wintry floods were rushing, making the streams difficult and at times dangerous to cross. Jesus and His disciples passed some villages on their way down, and at one of them into which He intended to go, they were stopped by a strange sight.

Standing upon the rocks on a rising ground, at a distance from the road, were ten miserable men clad in white, who were in different states of pitiful sickness, with little cloths hanging over their mouths, and bells at their waists. They needed not to cry, "Unclean, unclean !" and ring their bells and rattle their wooden clappers for Jesus to know that they were poor sick lepers, who were not allowed to enter any village, but had to live in wretched huts in the fields outside the walls. They had heard that Jesus healed sickness, and that He was coming that way, and they had struggled to this high ground that He might see their misery and pity them. When they saw Him coming they raised a croaking cry for help, and Jesus stopped and made a sign to them, and scrambling down from the rocks, they came nearer.

"Master, have mercy on us!" they begged of Him. "Master, have mercy on us!" When He saw their belief in Him, He did not touch them, as He did the leper in the Galilean village a year before, but said to them—

“Go and show yourselves to the priests.” Now every leper had to get a letter from a priest that He was healed, before he could go again into any town or village. The lepers knew in an instant what Jesus meant. Nine of them had to go to Jerusalem, being Judæans, and one to Gerezim, for he was a Samaritan, and they all started to go at once, knowing what depended on their doing as they were told. They had not gone far, until they felt their tottering legs grow strong, their white hands, soft and red. They were healed, even before they had seen the priests! Then they talked together, and the nine Judæans resolved to hasten on to the priests at Jerusalem, that they might be the sooner restored to their friends. They did not think of returning to thank Jesus. But when the Samaritan felt himself healed, much as he wished to see his friends again, he turned back, rejoicing in the vigour of his steps, shouting to all whom he saw, and praising God for His goodness, until he overtook Jesus, and then he knelt down on the road before Him, and thanked Him earnestly, although he might have had some hesitation in saluting a Jew. Jesus saw from the man’s dress and manner that he was a Samaritan.

“Did I not heal ten lepers?” He asked him. “Where are the other nine?” And looking round at the people who were there, He added, “Of these ten men, not one hath thought of giving thanks to God but this stranger!” And, turning again to the kneeling Samaritan, He said, “Rise, and go, thy trust hath healed thee!” And the man rose, with gratitude in his heart, at liberty now, to go to the priest and to his friends.

Jesus walked on with His disciples down a deep gorge in the hills, towards the fords of Jordan near Bethshean, where the river was wide and broad with high, thickly-wooded banks on each side, and there He crossed over from Galilee into the Peræa, in order to walk up the Eastern side of the river, keeping out of Samaria until they should reach the Fords near Jericho, where He would cross the river back again.

On His way through the villages of Galilee and the Peræa, the seventy men whom He had sent out some weeks before gradually joined Him again, each bringing in the same joyful story, mixed with a touch of childish exultation.

“Master,” they exclaimed, “even evil spirits obey us, through Thy name !” But Jesus did not like their foolish words, and spoke to them, saying—

“Be not joyful because evil spirits obey you, but rather be glad that your names are written in Heaven.” But they had worked hard and with success, and He rejoiced that while His enemies were powerful within the stone walls and forts of Jerusalem, in the open country, among the green glens and wooded hills of Galilee, the people were on His side. Their success deeply touched Him, and He thanked God for it in this short prayer—

“I thank Thee, O My Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that Thou hast hid these spiritual things from the men of learning and of wisdom, and hast made them known to children and simple people ; for so it hath pleased Thee.” He rejoiced that His spirit was welcomed by kind hearts, more than by clever heads, and that little children should early receive Him, for in them he saw angels clad in rosy flesh, companions in purity with Himself. And continuing, He said—

“All things have been given Me by God My Father, and none but God knoweth who I am, nor who He is, but I His Son, and they to whom I show Him.” Then, turning to His disciples, He told them privately how blessed they were, saying, “Blessed are the eyes which see the Spiritual things which yours see, for prophets and kings have wished to see the things which you see, and have not seen them, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear them.”

Remember how grieved Jesus was that these Judæans, who ought to have been grateful, went away in their new strength without thanking God, while the stranger came back to do so ; for many people beg blessings, who in the joy and comfort of enjoying them, forget to return any thanks, but

Ingratitude though very common and cruel, is a thing which little children can easily avoid by being thoughtful and kind.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

JORDAN, WINTER, A.D. 33.

It was now the month of December, the season when heavy rains soaked the ground and filled the watercourses with brimming streams, when cutting winds swept down the gorges of the hills, and the mountains of Northern Lebanon were white with snow.

Jesus continued walking with His friends journeying towards Jerusalem, and, perhaps after He had crossed the Jordan at the Fords of Bethshean and was on the Peræan side, He retired with a few of His disciples, as was His custom, to pray. Jesus prayed in private, and all His prayers that we have are very short ; but other Teachers prayed before the people, for ten or twenty minutes at a time. In the crowded Temple, on the busy street, they liked to be seen praying. Jesus used to climb a quiet hillside to be alone ; and at this time, when He returned to His disciples after praying, some of them who had watched Him from a distance, wished they could pray as He did, and said—

“Lord, teach us how to pray, as John the Baptist taught his followers.” Now, while Jesus had not taught His disciples any prayer to be especially their own, less than two years before, they had heard Him give the people on Mount Hattin a short prayer to use. But perhaps the disciples thought they should pray differently from other people, which was a great mistake. This is what He said to the people and the disciples on Mount Hattin about praying—

“When thou prayest, do not be like the hypocrites, who love to pray standing up in churches and standing at street corners, that people may see them praying ; for in being so seen they have received their reward. But when thou prayest, go into thine own room, and shut the door, and pray in secret to thy Father in Heaven, for He seeth in secret and

shall reward thee. In praying, do not say the same thing over and over again, as foolish men do, who think they shall be heard because they speak so much. Be not like them, for God knoweth what thou hast need of before thou askest Him."

This seemed strange to the disciples, who had always understood that the more men prayed, the better men they were. The Pharisees had a prayer for every hour of the day, and the disciples expected Jesus would have given them a long prayer to learn off: but instead of that, He now repeated over to them the same beautiful short prayer which He had given the people before in Galilee. It has only sixty-five words in it, and yet it has all that Jesus thought His disciples should say. A little prayer, that for two thousand years has been said in every part of the world, and in almost every language. A little prayer, that can all be said in a minute—simple, beautiful, earnest—in grave contrast to the long speeches which some professional prayer-makers say. A prayer, in which we call God our Father, and ask for only one gift, food for ourselves, and say, that as we do to others so may God do to us. A little prayer, that seeks to make Heaven upon earth.

"When you pray," Jesus said to His disciples, "say this: '*Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name! Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.*'"

That is the whole of the prayer, the only prayer which Jesus ever taught, and thou wilt learn it, for it means that thou dost ask God, whose Name is ever sacred, to spread His Kingdom of Heaven among men, that we may all obey Him here, as the angels do in His home of Heaven, that He will give thee food each day, and forgive thy faults, if thou dost forgive others, and that He will help thee to resist the spirit of evil and do good. This little prayer is not difficult to understand, for Jesus made it short, and simple, and beautiful, that children may learn it.

No doubt His disciples were disappointed when, having asked for a special lesson in praying, they were told to say only the same little prayer which Jesus had already given to the people. They saw, however, that the main thing in it is for men to be good. For if we are good to others, God will be good to us, and if we are unkind to others we cannot expect God to be kind to us. But Jesus told them that they must be in earnest when they prayed, not praying carelessly, nor were they to grow tired of praying and give it up. And He told them this story.

"A man had a friend," He said, "and he went to him in the middle of the night, and knocking at his door, said, 'A traveller hath come to my house from a journey, and I have no food to give him: lend me three loaves of bread.' To which the friend answered from the inside: 'Do not trouble me. My door is shut; and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee bread.' Yet," added Jesus, "although this man will not rise because he is his friend, if he shall continue to ask and will not go away, the man will rise and give him as many loaves as he needeth." Jesus meant that they were to pray as earnestly to God as the man in the story had asked for bread, but He told them that they would not find God slow to hear them, saying—

"Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. For he that asketh receiveth; he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it is opened." Now, some of the disciples had little children of their own; and that they might understand the love of our Father in Heaven, Jesus asked them this question—

"Which of you who is a father, if his son should ask a loaf of bread would give him a stone?" No one answered, for there was not one who would do such a thing to a little child. "Or if he ask a fish," Jesus continued, "would give him a serpent? Or if he ask an egg, would give him a scorpion?" Still no one answered. Such things would of course be cruel, for the scorpion would bite the child's hand. Looking calmly upon the young men around Him, Jesus ended

His lesson on prayer by telling them that much as fathers love their children, God loveth us more, and is willing to give us His Holy Spirit, a gift more precious than anything a man can give to his child.

“If you then, being men,” He continued, “know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” —That Holy Spirit, of which thou hast heard so often, to dwell in them and bring them into His Kingdom, and make them good and pure, like Jesus Himself. And thus He told them that God is far more willing to give us His Holy Spirit than any man can be willing to give presents to his own dear children.

When thou prayest, remember to say little and to mean every word. Rather do not pray at all than pray without thinking. Ask for the Holy Spirit, and that He may never leave thee; learn also the prayer of Jesus, and use it when so inclined. Pray as though Jesus stood beside thee listening; and pray anywhere and at any time, especially at evening and morning, remembering that prayer from a pure heart is sweet as the fragrance of flowers.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

JERICHO, WINTER, A.D. 33.

After crossing the river Jordan at the Fords of Bethshean, Jesus and His disciples had about forty miles to walk along the Peræan side, with the river Jabbock and at least six other streams to cross, which in Wintry spate poured through their rocky beds down to the Jordan's deeper channel. Travelling was thus very slow and often dangerous, and it would be two or three days before they re-crossed the Jordan by the well-known Fords near Jericho, where they were beyond the boundary of Samaria and into Judæa.

During all this last journey from Capernaum to Jerusalem, Jesus taught the people at different places. Now Jericho was a favourite place for priests and Lawyers to live at, and not

far from there, as Jesus was teaching one day, He was stopped by a clever Lawyer, who evidently had carefully prepared himself. He wished to seem like an earnest enquirer who had come to ask advice.

“Master, what shall I do to have Heaven?” he asked quietly. Like all Lawyers and Pharisees, he thought that Heaven was to be entered by keeping laws and obeying rules.

“What do thy books of the law say?” Jesus replied. “What dost thou read there?” This Lawyer’s business was to study these books and to teach others from them, and he answered smartly—

“As written by Moses, the law is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.” He thought the discussion was just beginning, but to his surprise the young Countryman, who had never been to college, turned the Lawyer’s answer back upon himself as if he had been a school boy, saying shortly—

“Thou hast answered rightly. Do that, and thou shalt have Heaven.” But the Lawyer did not really wish to know how to be good ; he wished to discuss theories and suppositions. It seemed like telling him that he did not understand the words which he had repeated like a parrot. His reputation as a Teacher was at stake, and he answered Jesus quickly—

“But who is my neighbour?” He had now forgotten his first question, and wished to wrangle about the meaning of a word. But Jesus would not argue, and slowly and calmly to this professional arguer, He began to tell a very simple little story about a Priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan. They were near Jericho, and would soon walk up the very road where the story was supposed to have happened. This is the story Jesus told.

A man was going down the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Now that road is through a wild and rocky gorge, and was so noted for armed thieves, that men were afraid to go down it alone. But this man had gone by himself.

And he came among thieves, who attacked him and beat him, leaving him lying wounded on the side of the road. While he lay there unable to rise, a Priest from the Golden Temple at Jerusalem happened to be going down that way, and when he saw the man lying, he would not go near him, but passed by on the other side, keeping as far off as he could. In the same way, a Levite, one of the singers from the Temple, when he came to the place where the poor man lay wounded and bleeding, went over and looked at him, and crossing the road again, also passed by on the other side. The wounded man was a poor Judæan, a countryman of their own, and yet these professors of religion would not help him. But a man from Samaria, riding on an ass, far from his home on a journey, came down next, and when he came to the poor man, he was sorry for him, and going over to him, poured oil and wine upon cloth bandages, and tied up his wounds, and lifting the poor man on to his ass's back, brought him to an inn at Jericho, and stayed with him there all night. But the man had been robbed of everything, and next morning, before the Samaritan left the inn, he gave the landlord some money saying, "Take good care of him, and whatever thou spendest more than this, I will pay thee when I come back again." Perhaps the Samaritan was a travelling merchant, who was well-known at the inns, but certainly he was a liberal-minded man when he was so kind to a Judæan in distress, for the Samaritans hated the Judæans so much that they could not even bear their shadow to fall upon them. But, in the poor man he saw only a fellow-traveller, robbed and wounded. If he had gone down the road first, it might have happened to himself. He would not stay his kindness because the man was a Judæan, and he did his work thoroughly, even to paying for him at the inn.

As Jesus told this story, the people crowded close to hear, for He told it in a way that touched their hearts, even the heart of the Lawyer, and turning to him when he finished, Jesus asked—

"Which of these three men was neighbour to the one that

fell among the thieves?" The answer was plain, but the proud Lawyer could not bring himself to say the hated word "Samaritan," so he answered—

"The one who was kind to him, was his neighbour." Then Jesus sent him away with these words to think over—

"Go thou and do the same." And the Lawyer went away, feeling that he had been fully answered, for he made no reply. And many who heard Jesus tell this story felt their hearts grow more kind and generous, especially those who remembered that only a few days before, Jesus Himself had been turned away from a Samaritan village.

And thou, too, wilt try to have the heart of this good Samaritan to all in distress, whether it be a brother weeping, a poor boy begging, or an animal in pain—think not of thy position and of theirs, think only of their distress, and do what thou canst to help them, looking not for thanks, for, to do what Jesus loves, is thanks enough. And it is of Him that the poet Tennyson writes in these beautiful words—

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands, the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought.

JERUSALEM AND THE PERÆA.

THE COTTAGE AT BETHANY.

BETHANY, WINTER, A.D. 33.

IF Jesus went into Jericho at this time,—the city of towers and soldiers, whose streets were shaded by the feathery palm, and fragrant with the scent of roses,—He did not stay long there, but went on by the stone-paved road that wound over bare hills towards the rocky gorge that leads up to Jerusalem. Six hours of hard walking and climbing, brought them to the top of the gorge, and on the Eastern side of the Mount of Olives, where they went into the sheltered village of Bethany—the home of dates—so called because of the tall date palm-trees which grew among the little white cottages. It was built in a hollow of the hill, and while only half an hour's walk from Jerusalem, the great city was hidden from view by a rising part of the Mount. To this day Bethany is a favoured spot where the almond tree blows white, and the apricot and olive grow, and in Spring the fresh green grass is coloured with wildflowers in rare profusion.

At the beautiful Lake of Gennesaret, the fisherman's house had been the home of Jesus, and now He was to find His home in a little tree-shaded, vine-covered cottage, at Bethany. Lazarus, a rich man, lived there, with his two sisters, Martha and Mary, and although we now hear of them for the first time, it is likely that Jesus had stayed with them before, for when He came to the village, Martha came out and asked Him to live at their house, and He went. Now, she was the elder sister, and she at once began to prepare food for Jesus and those

who were with Him, but Mary, who was young, and who had heard Him speaking outside, when He came in and sat talking to them about Heaven, went and sat on the floor at His feet, listening earnestly to every word He said, quite forgetting that food had to be prepared, and the table arranged for the hungry guests. Martha had much to do, and as she hurried to and fro about the house, she wondered why Mary did not help her as usual, and noticed that Jesus was talking to her, while, all unconscious of Martha's growing annoyance, Mary sat listening, and gazing into His beautiful face, until Martha could restrain herself no longer, and speaking in a practical way, as if she were speaking to her brother, she said—

“Master ! dost Thou not care that my sister leaveth me to work alone ? Tell her to help me !” This was her hasty way of chiding Jesus for keeping Mary listening, for she knew that one word from Him would send her to help. But she was troubling herself too much with preparations, and about Mary not helping her ; and did not consider that she might have greater things to think about than helping to prepare dishes. Martha might have seen from Mary's face that she was earnestly thinking, but all she noticed was that she was not helping her as usual. The answer of Jesus is like a brother's reply. In a half-playful way He pointed out Martha's fault, and the reason for Mary's forgetfulness—

“Martha ! Martha !” He said, “thou art anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is needed, and Mary hath chosen the good part which shall never be taken from her.” Jesus always refused to be a judge between people, and, while letting Martha know that she troubled herself too much about trifles, and should think more of higher things, He told the youthful Mary that she was wise in making sure of that high thing about which she sat thinking ; but He did not say she was not to help her sister. It is likely that, having been told she had made sure of the one object of her thoughts, Mary would rise and help her kind sister Martha with a glad heart and light step, for they were both good women, and Jesus loved them. And ever after this, on His

visits to Jerusalem, He came to live at the vine-clad cottage of Lazarus ; and how much more like brothers and sisters were they to Him than His own brothers and sisters at Nazareth who doubted what He said !

It was still some days from the Festival of Dedication, and Jesus went into the city every day to teach in the Temple. Now in Jerusalem there were a great many beggars, especially at Festival times, when strangers came in from the country. All who were poor and could not work, begged, and the favourite place was the great marble steps that led up to the outer gates of the Temple ; there the lame and blind and poor sat calling to the crowds who were passing up, to give them something.

Among them was a well-known beggar, an independent, fearless man, who had begged since he was a child, for he was born blind, and yet he knew all that was going on in the city, and was known as "the man who was born blind." In that country the people thought that such a thing as blindness must have come as a punishment to the man or his father or mother for being bad, and the disciples believed this also. One Sabbath day, as they were going through the city, they saw this blind beggar, and one of the disciples asked Jesus—

"Master ! who was bad : this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ?" Such ideas were nonsense, and Jesus answered—

"Neither this man nor his parents have been wicked ;" adding, "I must work the works of God who sent Me while I can ; for the night cometh, when no man can work"—meaning that we should do good while we can, for death stops all work ; and while He stood speaking at the steps of the Temple, some one brought the man up to Him that He might heal him, and soon a crowd gathered. Taking some of the dust of the street in His hand, and spitting upon it, Jesus made a little clay with His finger, and rubbing it upon the eyes of the blind beggar, He said to him—

"Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam," which was the favourite spring of the city. And Jesus went away with His

disciples, leaving the man to do as He said. There he stood, with the yellow clay upon his eyes, blind still ; some were laughing at him, some advising him to try it. But the beggar never had a doubt. Grasping his staff firmly, and pushing the people aside, he walked off towards the pool, for he knew the streets, and the people followed him. Through the winding streets, out by the city gate, down the road into the vale of Kedron, down to the edge of the clear, sparkling pool ; and while some jeered, he knelt quickly and washed off the clay, and as he did so the light of day dawned for the first time upon his eyes.

And thou wilt remember, from the pretty glimpse which thou hast had into the cottage at Bethany, that the first thing is to get the Spirit of Jesus and after that thou mayest run to and fro serving Him ; and never let the bustle of the world rise so high in thy mind that thou canst not see when any one is sitting in silent worship at His feet.

THE BEGGAR AND THE PRIESTS.

JERUSALEM, WINTER, A.D. 33.

As the beggar stood by the side of the sweet, sparkling Pool of Siloam, in the valley of the Kedron, with the great white walls of the Temple towering on the cliffs above him, and the wild rocks rising on the other side of the stream to the foot of Olivet, the people pressed round him to see his eyes. He did not care for them, but pushed his way through the throng, with his staff dangling in his hand, and looking about him, returned up the rough path to the city. When he reached his old haunts, all who knew him exclaimed—

“Is not this he who sat and begged?” And some answered, “Yes, it is he ;” and others said, “No, but it is like him ;” and overhearing them, he exclaimed stoutly—

“I am he !” Then the people in the city came to look at him, and some one asked—

“How were thine eyes opened?” And his answer shows

that, though sitting blind by the roadside, he had heard of Jesus.

"The man that is called Jesus made clay and put it upon mine eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash;' and I went, and washed, and see." There were Pharisees among the people, and when they heard the name of Jesus, one of them said—

"Where is He?" The sturdy beggar had an idea that this sharp question meant mischief, for Jesus had healed him on the Sabbath day, which, as thou knowest, was against the rules of the Pharisees, and he answered—

"I do not know." For truly he did not know where Jesus might be by that time; and he tried to go away, but the Pharisees told him he must come with them before the council of priests, for having had something to do with Sabbath breaking. They hoped to get him to blame Jesus, but he intended to do nothing of the kind. He was only a beggar, with nothing to lose; but he had a stout, grateful heart, and in cleverness was equal to the Pharisees; and at length he stood before the council, barefooted with stout stick and rags, a fearless prisoner. The Pharisees could not punish the grateful beggar for letting himself be healed, but they hoped to turn him into a witness against Jesus, for this was the sixth healing they knew that Jesus had done on the Sabbath. Even to make so much clay as could stand on the finger-tip was, they said, to work on the Sabbath.

"How didst thou receive thy sight?" they asked the beggar. He had already told the Pharisees in the street all about it, and got taken a prisoner through doing so; and he intended to say very little now.

"He put clay upon mine eyes," he replied, "and I washed, and see." There was no doubt of the healing, for many of the council had seen him blind, before, as he begged at the Temple, and they discussed the case earnestly among themselves.

"This Jesus is not a good man," said one, "for He keepeth not the Sabbath." But said another, thoughtfully—

“How can a wicked man do a thing like this?” And so the council were divided, and disputed with each other, while the sturdy beggar stood at the bar looking closely at them from under his tattered turban. Then some one thought they should ask him whether he thought Jesus a good man, and he put the question thus—

“What dost thou say about Him who opened thine eyes?” And they waited for his answer.

“He is a Prophet,” the beggar replied with vigour, meaning that Jesus was a good man ; and this set the council talking again. Some said they did not believe the man had ever been blind, and that he was a cheat ; and then his father and mother were sent for, and after some delay the two old people, much afraid, were made to stand beside their bold son.

“Is this your son whom you say was born blind?” the chairman asked them sternly. He hoped they would say no ; but they answered humbly—

“We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind ; but we do not know how he can now see, or who hath made him see. Ask him, he is old enough, and shall speak for himself.” They were only poor timid people, and knew that their sturdy son could take care of himself, and had also heard that some of the council had threatened that if any one said Jesus was the Christ they would be punished. The beggar had heard this too. The council were now almost forced to admit that this man had been healed, for no one would deny it ; but they thought they would hear the man’s story over again. He seemed a bold fellow, and a solemn warning might frighten him.

“Give God the praise,” the chairman said sternly to him, which was a rebuke for calling Jesus a Prophet. “We know that this Jesus is a wicked man.” They expected the beggar to deny this, and waited for his reply. But he answered in a cautious, dogged way that irritated them—

“Whether Jesus be a wicked man or no, I know not, but one thing I do know, that once I was blind and now I can see.” He kept to the point.

“What did He do to thee?” they asked him again. “How did He make thee see?” Now this sturdy beggar disliked the priests. They had shown him no kindness when he was blind, and now that he could see, he knew that they were hypocrites who were only seeking for an excuse to punish both him and Jesus; and seeing their great eagerness that he should tell the story for the third time, he asked them all, with a grin upon his unshaven visage, as he looked at their fine clothes and gold finger rings—

“I told you only this minute, how He healed me, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you wish to become disciples of His?” He well knew how they hated Jesus, that to say such a thing was to insult the whole council and put them into a passion; and he was not surprised when, forgetting their high position, they began to scold with tongues no better than his old beggar-companions.

“Thou art His disciple!” they cried. “We are disciples of Moses. We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow Jesus, we know not whence He is.” With another roguish grin, and lifting his hands in mock astonishment, the beggar exclaimed, interrupting them—

“Why, this is a wonderful thing! that you do not know where He came from, and yet He healed my blindness!” And this bold witty beggar in rags, who feared no man, proceeded to give these proud religious Teachers a lesson of his own thinking, although he knew he would be punished for it. “We know that God will not hear bad persons,” he continued; “but if one be a worshipper of God and doeth His will, God heareth him. Since the beginning of the world a man hath never been known to give sight to one who was born blind. If this man did not come from God, He could not do it.” Thus he tried to teach his masters, who had themselves often said that God would not hear bad men. But to be taught by a beggar! however right he might be, was what the council would not stand; and, full of superior goodness, they answered him thus—

“Thou wast altogether born in wickedness, and dost thou

try to teach us?" And they sentenced him at once to be cast out, which was that he should not be allowed into any church, that people should not speak to him nor in any way help him; and calling their guards, they had the man rudely put out of the council hall. But what did it matter to a beggar! who had no wish to trouble the churches of these hypocrites? If he could meet Jesus Himself, it would be something more to his mind. And with a cheerful face he walked away in the sunshine between his old father and mother. He wished to *see* Jesus, for he had only *heard* Him before. The news of his defence and punishment spread through Jerusalem, and Jesus heard of it and sought and found the beggar in the street, and made Himself known to him.

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Jesus asked him.

"And who is He, Master? that I may believe on Him," for he was willing to do whatever Jesus told him.

"Thou hast seen Him," said Jesus quietly, "*and it is He that speaketh to thee now.*"

"Lord! I believe," exclaimed the beggar, as kneeling down upon the road, regardless of Pharisees or any one else who might see him, he worshipped the young Countryman from Galilee.

To be grateful is to be good. Imitate the courage of this sturdy beggar. He had never seen, he did not know Jesus, but He had been kind to him, and he would stand up for Jesus whether in the street or before the council, teaching all Jerusalem that to be an outcast with Jesus was better than to win the favour of the Rulers.

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP.

JERUSALEM, WINTER, A.D. 33.

After speaking to the beggar in the streets of Jerusalem, Jesus began to teach the people, most likely going into the Temple. Speaking to those who had seen the joy of the poor man, He said—

"I came to the world that they who do not see might get sight, and that they who see might become blind"—meaning that He had come to make humble people good, and proud people foolish ; and, hearing this, a Pharisee, who thought that only the common people could be called blind or ignorant, exclaimed—

"Are we Pharisees blind also?"

"If you were humble," said Jesus, "you would have no badness, but now you think you are good, and so you remain bad."

Jesus had come from the green sheep pastures of Galilee, but the people before Him did not know, when they saw the poor sheep driven in terror through the stony streets of Jerusalem, how much the shepherds of Galilee and of Bethlehem loved their sheep. And He told them a story with a meaning, about the shepherds who gather their sheep at night into a fold, which is a large open space with stone walls round it, covered on the top with strong prickly thorns to keep the wolves, leopards, or panthers from leaping over. Supposing the sheep to be all inside, Jesus said—

"Whoever cometh not into the sheepfold by the door, but climbeth over the wall, is a thief and robber. But he that cometh to the door is the shepherd, and the keeper within openeth the door to him." He told them also how the shepherds of Galilee separated their own sheep from others. "The sheep know their shepherd's voice, and he calleth his own sheep, each by its name, and leadeth them out to the pastures." And then He told them a beautiful thing which would surprise any one who had only seen sheep in the streets of a town.

"When the shepherd hath got out all his own sheep from the fold, he walketh before them and they follow him, for they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but will run from him, for they do not know his voice, and are afraid." Thou canst see the pretty picture. The shepherd in the early morning, with staff, and cloak, and dog, and the white woolly sheep running after him, some pressing close to his side, some with little lambs frisking round them, and all winding up the

green sheltered valley to the cool, windy mountain. In Scotland a sight may be seen not much different from this, as at the evening hour, when clouds are red and the heather glows purple in the sunset, the red-cheeked milkmaid, bare-footed, yellow-haired, goes forth to the hillside, calling, calling and singing, and soon her dappled cows come lowing up from the bushy burn, and winding down from the rocky hill, and then she turns and leads them home to milking. But they will not come to a stranger's voice.

Jesus next spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven as a great sheep fold, and called Himself the door of it, by which all may come in, saying—

“I am the Door of the fold of Heaven. All who enter in by Me shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find food and rest.” He spoke next of two kinds of shepherds, the good shepherd who watches his own sheep and loves them, and the bad shepherd who watches the sheep for money only, saying, “A good shepherd will risk his life for his sheep. But the man who worketh for money only, and is not a good shepherd, to whom the sheep do not belong, when he seeth a wolf coming, leaveth the sheep, and runneth away, and the wolf biteth and scattereth them, while he fleeth, because he worketh for money only, and careth not for the sheep.” Then Jesus told them that He was the good Shepherd who loves His followers, saying—

“I am the Good Shepherd, and know Mine own followers, and they know Me, just as God My Father in Heaven knoweth Me and I know Him; and I shall lay down My life for My followers”—meaning that He would not flee when the time of danger came, but would rather be killed. He had spoken as if Jews alone were to enter the fold of Heaven, but now He told the people again what He had told them at Capernaum eighteen months before, that Heaven is open to all the world. “I have other sheep, He said, which are not of this fold; them also I must lead, and they shall know My voice, and all shall become one great flock with one shepherd. And My Father in Heaven loveth Me because I shall lay down My

life, that I may take it up again. No one taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down of My own free will ; for I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This I received from God."

Strange things for the people to hear amid the stone arches of the Temple court, or perhaps in a street of Jerusalem ! A fresh young Countryman talking of the ways of the shepherds of His native hills, and in the next sentence saying that He would lay down His life for His followers, and take it up again. Die, and yet live ! what did He mean ? Little wonder that the people were astonished, and talked about Jesus while the bitter Pharisees, who thought He spoke foolishness, could only repeat their old cruel lie about Him.

"He hath a spirit of evil in Him, and is mad," and turning to the people, they said, "Why do you listen to Him ?" Why, indeed, did the people listen to this plain young Countryman, rather than to their own trained religious Teachers ? who thought that all knowledge and all wisdom were bound up in their particular turbans ! But some of the better among them said with grave faces—

"These are not the words of one who hath a spirit of evil." Goodness, gentleness, self-sacrifice, these were things which could not come from a bad spirit ; He must have a good spirit in Him. And they repeated to each other the question which the beggar had put to their council that day—

"Can any one who hath a spirit of evil give sight to a blind man ?" But they were afraid to answer the question truthfully.

Remember, my child, to be kind to all living things. Wouldst thou have the redbreast sing thee his sweetest song ? feed him with crumbs in Winter, and in Summer he will flutter round thee in the garden. Love thy pony, thy dog, thy canary, and when thou art a man thou wilt not be found hunting a frightened hare to death, or pouring bullets into the breasts of fluttering grouse ; for, as Samuel Coleridge said—

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the great God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

SOLOMON'S PORCH IN WINTER.

JERUSALEM, WINTER, A.D. 33.

The Festival of Dedication had come. It was held in December, when the moon was full and lasted for eight days, during which the people feasted, danced, rejoiced, and lit up their houses with little candles, while the priests had special services in the Temple, and illuminations with torches, candles, and lamps. One hundred and sixty years before, the Temple, which, as the Jews thought, had been rendered unfit for their worship, was purified, a new altar built, and the whole reopened, and dedicated afresh with great joy by Judas Macca-bæus, a Jewish soldier, and the joyful Festival was in memory of that event.

The Temple was crowded every day with people from all parts of the country. Perhaps it rained, perhaps the feathery snow was falling on the coloured marble of the great open squares; but one day the people sought the shelter of the covered porches. Now Solomon's porch was the most famous of all the porches, for it was partly built of the same white marble blocks of which the first temple was made by King Solomon about one thousand years before. It stood on the top of the huge wall that was built up from the Kedron valley, and had in it a double row of splendid marble pillars which supported a roof of marble and cedar wood; on one side, it was open to the great Court of the Gentiles, while on the other side, windows looked Eastward, out towards the Mount of Olives and the rising sun.

Jesus also sought the shelter of this porch, and walked between the rows of pillars, upon the red and green marble pavement, from which He had a view out across the deep and dizzy valley of the Kedron, that flowed in Wintry torrent, and over to the terraced slopes of Olivet, with the road to Bethany winding over its shoulder; and perhaps He saw the rare sight of falling snow powdering field and wood, crag and slope, with dazzling whiteness. But He did not walk there unnoticed

by the Pharisees and their friends. They were celebrating in this Festival the successful result of a revolt against oppression, and thoughts of a revolt against the Romans were present in the minds of the people. The Pharisees hoped that they might make use of this feeling to tempt Jesus into favouring a rising of the people against their Roman oppressors, round Him as the Christ, which would lead to a riot, and His being taken a prisoner as the leader. Coming to Him as He walked in Solomon's porch, as though they were His warmest friends, they said, urging Him—

“How long wilt Thou keep us in doubt? If Thou art the Christ tell us plainly.” Their question looked as if He had been hiding something from them, whereas it was they who would not believe Him when He spoke. His reply reminded them gently of this—

“I have told you,” He said, “but you will not believe Me; and the wonderful things which I do in the name of God, they confirm what I say.” And He also reminded them of what He had said a day or two ago about the shepherd and the sheep, continuing—

“You do not believe Me, because you are not My followers. My sheep hear My voice and follow Me, and I know My followers and shall give them Heaven, and they shall never perish, nor shall any one take them out of My hand. God who gave them to Me is greater than all, and no one can take them out of His hand. *I and God are One.*” Having now been plainly told that Jesus was One in Spirit with God, these pretended friends of His, instead of rejoicing to hear Him say so, stopped Him with rude angry cries, and running through the court to a part of the Temple where the building was being repaired, they returned with stones in their hands, saying they would stone Him. But He did not fear the anger that flashed in their dark eyes, for He knew that they had always hated Him.

“Many good things have I shown you from God,” He said, looking calmly at them. “For which of these do you stone Me?” And He waited for their answer, which was a

hasty admission that He had only one fault,—*He was the Christ.*

“For a good thing we do not stone Thee,” they replied hotly, “but for blasphemy, because, being a man, Thou makest Thyself equal with God.” But He silenced these learned Teachers of the law by reminding them that in their own books they called some good men “gods.”

“If you call men ‘gods,’” He said, “to whom the Spirit of God came in past time, why do you say to Me, whom God hath sent into the world and kept from wickedness, that I blaspheme, when I say I am the Son of God?” The Pharisees could not answer this question, and stood silent while He went on, “If I do not the works of God, then do not believe that I am from God; but if I do the things of God, although you do not believe what I say, believe what I do.” He meant, that if He did the will of God, then it was plain that God’s Spirit was in Him; and He told them why He wished so earnestly that they should believe Him, in these words, “That you may know and understand that God’s Spirit is in Me, and that I am in God.” The people had been forced to listen thus far, but when they heard Jesus say that He was in God, they would listen no longer. And as He pressed His way through the crowd in the porch, towards the Golden Gate that led out of the Temple into the city street, His enemies sought to catch hold of Him; but His friends were round about, and they were unable to take Him. Thus the Pharisee’s trick was exposed, for the more He answered them, showing that He was the Christ, the more they would not believe either what He said or did.

I trust, after all thou hast heard of Jesus, that thou art not one of those who would mockingly say, “Tell us more plainly, art thou the Christ?” but rather, drawn by His love, thou art one of the little children who know His voice, and who hear and follow Him.

DANGER IN JERUSALEM.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

What Jesus said to the people in Solomon's porch, so roused His enemies the priests and Lawyers, that it was no longer safe for Him to go into the Temple or even to remain near Jerusalem. He was not allowed to teach in the churches of Galilee or in Judæa; He had been turned back in Samaria, and now, after what had happened, He did not try to return to Jerusalem, but bidding farewell to His friends at Bethany, He went with His disciples once more down the Jericho road, across the fords of Jordan, and into the Peræan country, on the other side of the Jordan. In that part of the land the people were not so much under the rule of the priests, as at Jerusalem, and He was still free to teach in the villages and even in their churches. He was going to the village of Bethabara, on the banks of a stream that ran into the Jordan, where John the Baptist had lived and taught; and as it was mid-winter, with the roads rough and broken with streams of water that dashed across them down from the hills, it took several days to reach the village. There the people received Him kindly, and He lived there for some time, teaching in safety.

Jesus was now thirty-three years of age, and had been three years a Teacher, and the people of Bethabara remembered how John had baptized Him, and, how, standing in his strange rough dress and hairy belt, he had told them that he was not good enough to loosen the buckle of Jesus' shoe. They had loved John, and believed what he said, and remembered with anger how he had been killed in prison by King Antipas, and were glad that Jesus, of whom they had heard so much, had come to live with them; and they came in crowds to hear Him speak, and to have their sick healed, and as they compared John and Jesus, and thought of what John had told them of Him, they exclaimed—

“John did no wonders, but all the things that he said about this Man are true!” But this was not all. Instead of shouting at Jesus, and lifting stones against Him, the people listened

to His words, and many of them believed that He spoke the truth. And from Bethabara He went to other parts of the Peræa, teaching in their villages.

But one day a man came from Bethany, with a sad message from Martha and Mary—

“He whom thou lovest is ill,” it said. They knew Jesus would know they meant Lazarus, but they did not care to ask Him to come back into danger at Jerusalem, nor did they even suggest what He might do. It had taken the messenger two days to come from Bethany, and on the day he arrived Lazarus died ; but Jesus said to the messenger—

“This illness is not unto death, but for the praise of God, and that I may be glorified by it.” And the messenger returned to Bethany with this answer ; but although Jesus loved Lazarus, He remained two days longer in the same place, and on the third day He said to His disciples—

“Let us go back into Judæa.” They were astonished that He should wish to return into danger so soon.

“Master,” they exclaimed, “only a short time ago the Judæans wished to stone Thee, and wilt Thou go back to Jerusalem again?” Jesus replied, that as long as He had work to do, His life would be safe ; and while they were preparing to go, He explained—

“Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep, but I am going that I may awake him out of sleep.” They did not know that this was His gentle way of telling them that Lazarus was dead. Long ago He had said that the ruler’s little daughter was “asleep,” when she was dead, for death to Him was as sleep. But the disciples, thinking only of His danger, replied—

“Master, if Lazarus hath fallen asleep, he will get well again.” For they thought He spoke of taking rest in sleep, which is always a good sign of a sick person.

“Lazarus is dead,” He replied gently, “and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe in Me. Let us go to him.” The disciples hesitated, but Thomas, the brave fisherman, urged them to stand by Jesus to the last, in these dogged words—

"Let us all go, that we may die with Him." And, believing that the council in Jerusalem would certainly take Him and kill Him if He came near their city, these twelve men resolved to go with Jesus, even if they should be killed also. The same Wintry roads were traversed again, the same cold rivers forded and dangers faced, that Jesus might visit the little home in Bethany, where the sisters were weeping.

The example of brave, plain-spoken Thomas, put courage into the others, and telleth us that it is better to go into danger, following the path of duty and love, than to win safety by deserting a friend; for true friendship does not change with danger.

AT THE GRAVE OF LAZARUS.

BETHANY, WINTER, A.D. 33.

What was happening in the little vine-clad cottage at Bethany while Jesus was in the Peræa? The sisters sent off the messenger in haste, and anxiously watched their sick brother Lazarus; but instead of getting better, he grew worse and died, and the man returned with this message from Jesus—

"This illness is not unto death, but for the praise of God, that Jesus may be glorified by it." What could it mean? For their brother was already dead. Why had Jesus not done something? Was He coming? His message did not say so, and the sisters wept again. They were rich people, and the news of the death of Lazarus was soon told in Jerusalem; and their friends came out to Bethany to the funeral, and Lazarus was laid in a grave in their beautiful garden, at the part where the roses and myrtle grew. Women wept and mourned in the house, sitting on the floor with torn clothes and dust on their heads, and doleful flutes, the sign of death, were blown; and friends came to sit day and night with the sisters for the first seven days of mourning. Three days went past, spent in sitting upon the floor wrapped in veils, or in weeping at the stone covered door of the grave; while the sad flutes sounded

and the mourning women wept and praised their dead brother. At first their hope was strong in Jesus, but now it seemed as though He had forgotten them.

On the fourth day, in the afternoon, as they were sitting in the cottage, with all the seats and couches turned upside down and the door wide open, weeping still with their friends round them, some one entered quickly and whispered to the sisters that Jesus had come and was close to the village. Mary paid no heed. He had come too late she thought. But Martha rose, and telling no one, went out, and when she met Jesus on the road, with a fresh outburst of weeping, she exclaimed—

“Lord! if Thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died. Even yet I know that whatever Thou dost ask of God, He will give Thee.”

“Thy brother shall rise again,” Jesus said, gently.

“I know he will rise again,” replied Martha, in passionate grief, “when all that are dead rise at the last day.” She thought He was trying to console her, but He replied in words the full weight and mystery of which I cannot explain to thee—

“I am the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whoever liveth and believeth on Me, shall never die.” One thing He did mean, that death cannot destroy the spirit of man, nor put an end to that Heaven,—that union with God,—which men get by believing in Jesus. And looking kindly upon the sorrowing face of Martha, He asked—

“Dost thou believe Me?” For she seemed in her grief as though she no longer trusted Jesus; but she answered with a confession of her simple woman’s faith, which was still unchanged.

“Yes, Lord. I have believed that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, that should come into the world”—the promised Christ. He then asked for Mary, and hearing she was at home, bade Martha go for her, while He waited there. Martha found her still sitting on the floor.

"Mary, the Master is here, and calleth thee," she whispered. Then Mary rose quickly and went out after Martha ; and the friends, thinking that she was again overcome with grief, and was going to the grave to weep, followed her, weeping and lamenting through the village. When Mary came to where Jesus waited with His disciples, she went forward and knelt down upon the road before Him, and the first words which rose to her lips were what she and Martha had often exclaimed in their grief—

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus heard the loud weeping and wailing of those who had followed Mary, some of whom were paid to wail, He was indignant ; but when He looked at the real grief of the youthful Mary as she sobbed and wept, with her hands over her face, bowed down in the dust of the road, her yellow hair falling in loosened tresses over her mourning dress, and saw the tears of Martha, who stood by, He was deeply moved, for they had been as sisters to Him.

"Where have you laid him ?" He asked gently.

"Come, Lord, and see," was their simple answer. And as He walked towards the grave between the weeping sisters, the people saw that Jesus also wept. Young, strong, fearless, shâken with sobs, silently weeping on the open road ! No wonder that those who saw it said with hushed voices—

"See how He loved him !" And yet, among the Jews who had come out from Jerusalem, there were enemies who said—

"Could not this Man, who gave sight to the blind beggar, have kept Lazarus from dying ?" Thus, in their desire to find fault, admitting that Jesus had healed the blind beggar. But even His sorrow did not shield Him from their hatred ; and Jesus sighed with grief and indignation as He listened to their reproaches.

When they reached the grave, it was in their beautiful garden of rare trees and flowers by the side of the hill, in which a cave was cut out of the limestone rock, as a burying place ; and there was a stone laid against the entrance to the cave.

"Take away the stone," Jesus said, to the men who were standing by. Thinking that He wished to see Lazarus, Martha remonstrated hastily.

"Lord, by this time he is not fit to be seen," she exclaimed, "for he hath been dead four days."

"Did I not say to thee," Jesus replied, putting her aside gently, "that if thou didst believe thou wouldst see the glory of God?" The stone was then taken away, but Jesus did not go into the open cave as all expected He would do, but while they stood silently watching, He looked up to Heaven, and praying, said—

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I know that Thou hearest Me always ; but because of the people who are standing here, I say it, that they may believe that Thou, God, didst send Me." The green hillside, the motionless trees, the trailing flowers hanging over the dark door of the open cave, the pale sisters, the silent crowd—Jesus wished to impress the scene upon all who saw it ; then, looking towards the cave, He cried with a loud voice—

"Lazarus, come forth !" and Lazarus came ; a white figure, wrapped in the linen clothes of the dead.

"Loose his bandages and let him go," Jesus said, and with hands trembling for joy, Martha and Mary loosened the wrappings which they had tied in tears four days ago, and clasped their living brother in their arms. From the grave they returned to the little cottage, no longer now the place of mourning, while the people looked in silent wonder at Lazarus and Jesus.

Now there were some leading men of Jerusalem there when this happened, and they were so impressed that they no longer doubted that Jesus was the Christ. But there were others who were not convinced by what they saw, but rather made more unbelieving, and they went back to the city and told the leaders of the council of priests that Jesus had returned to Bethany, and all that had happened.

If thou ever thinkest that Jesus does not feel for thy little griefs, think of Him weeping with these sisters before all the people, and it will teach thee that His feelings are like thy

feelings, and that His Spirit will soothe thy sorrow, if thou tellest thy grief to Him.

THE COUNCIL OF PRIESTS.

JERUSALEM, WINTER, A.D. 33.

When the news about Lazarus became known in Jerusalem, many people came over Olivet to Bethany to see him, and went back talking about Jesus, and many of the common people believed that He was the Christ. Hearing of this, the priests grew uneasy, and Caiaphas, the High priest, called together his council of chief priests, rulers, Lawyers, Pharisees, and Sadducees, to consider what should be done. There were about seventy men in this council; twenty-four were called chief priests, because they were heads over the twenty-four courses of priests who took week about to serve in the Temple, and there were fourteen other leading priests; the rest were leading citizens of Jerusalem, some of whom were friendly to Jesus. They sat in rows in the hall of hewn stones, in the Priests' court of the Temple: the proud, wealthy Sadducee, his rich robes showing him to be of the very highest rank; the pale, sanctimonious Pharisee, who with upturned eyes pretended to despise money and honour; the grave, thoughtful Lawyer, who felt it his duty to remove difficulties from the law, and to make more; the priest, with his dress of a shape different from all the rest; and in the middle, the president's chair, on which sat the white-faced, cruel Caiaphas, in his dark blue robe, bordered with purple, gold, and scarlet—rich Sadducean High priest, and most powerful Jew in Jerusalem.

They had met to decide what was to be done to stop at once the rapidly growing popularity of Jesus. A few words explained the business. Jesus, the young Carpenter of Nazareth, who hurriedly left the city after the last Festival of Dedication, had returned, and had performed either a great trick or a great wonder at Bethany, for all the people were saying He had raised Lazarus to life. What was to be done?

The friends of Jesus in the council spoke in His favour, and His enemies spoke against Him ; but all seemed to agree that it could no longer be denied that He was a wonderful Person.

“What shall we do?” said one. “This man doeth many wonders.” Some were for leaving Him alone, but one of His enemies said—

“If we let Him alone as we are doing, everybody will believe He is the Christ, and follow Him, and the Romans will send soldiers and put an end to both our city and nation.” Evidently this councillor believed that either they must put Jesus down or they would get into trouble with the Romans. He meant that Jesus would raise the people to fight against their Roman conquerors, as false Christs had done before, and that they would send an army to destroy Jerusalem and take away all their liberties. And the council thought him a wise speaker, for these risings of the people had always brought severe punishment. Jesus, however, had never spoken of doing such a thing.

Caiaphas meanwhile sat silent and frowning in his president's seat. Not only was he a great Sadducee, but he had been made High priest by the Roman emperor, Tiberias Cæsar, and he was annoyed that the council should find so much to say in favour of Jesus. It was his duty to listen to all, before he spoke, and at last his turn came. He had heard, with suppressed anger, some one saying that Jesus had done nothing to deserve death, and with a look of scorn, as though he despised the whole council, and thought no more of destroying Jesus than of killing one of the animals that were daily sacrificed in the great Temple, he exclaimed—

“You know nothing! Do you not think that it is better for us that one man should die for the people than that our whole nation should perish?” The president had spoken! reminding them of a common proverb of the people—“better one man die, than a nation perish;”—and his advice became the finding of the majority of the council. Jesus shall die, and die for the people; but these words of Caiaphas, which seemed like a prophecy, were only the expression of a mur-

derous purpose which he afterwards did his utmost to carry out. This was the end of the meeting, and the people were told that the council had decided that Jesus was to be taken a prisoner, and given up to them. And Caiaphas and his friends planned how they should have Jesus put to death when they got Him, for, while they could condemn prisoners to death, the Romans had taken away their power to kill them. The friends of Jesus told Him of all that had happened in the council, but He was not alarmed. While Caiaphas was delivering his bombastic advice to kill Him, Jesus knew what that advice would certainly be, but His time had not yet come to die, although He had now not four months to live. But He could no longer go about openly, because of the Judæans, many of whom would have gladly tried to get Him taken a prisoner, in obedience to the wish of the council, who would have rewarded any one who did so; and He quietly withdrew from Bethany, and again crossed the Jordan, going over the Mountains of Gilead to Ephraim, a distant hill town on the far-off borders of the Peræa, next to the wilderness.

Thou wilt learn from this the wickedness of using a high office for purposes of malice and oppression; and wilt take care never to use thy religion as a cloak for saying or doing cruel things to those who think differently from thee; for true goodness is never cruel.

SABBATH-KEEPING.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

In the Peræan country, Jesus again went about with His disciples from village to village teaching, although it was still the wet Winter season, and on the Sabbaths He taught in the churches, and the country people came in crowds to hear Him, the men sitting together, while the women with their children sat by themselves behind a stone screen. On one of these Sabbaths, as He was speaking, there was visible behind the screen the figure of a poor bent woman, and stopping teaching, Jesus

asked her to come out to Him, and she slowly made her way towards the entrance to the men's part, and came up the church to where Jesus sat. The chief men, who sat at the head of the church, were shocked that He should thus bring her out among the men; but Jesus, coming down from the Teacher's place, met her as she came forward, and putting both of His hands upon her, said—

“Woman, thou art healed from thy trouble.” And to the wonder and joy of the people, she stood upright again, and began to praise God for healing her, and all the people praised the good deed. Now this was the seventh time Jesus had publicly broken the Sabbath rules of the Pharisees, and the Ruler of the church, who had charge of the service on the Sabbath, was angry when he saw what Jesus had done. Being a strict man, he thought He should have waited until Monday before healing this poor woman, and being annoyed with the people and the woman for praising this breach of the Pharisees' rules, he exclaimed—

“Are there not six days in the week in which men ought to work? You should come on them to be healed, and not on the Sabbath.” But Jesus would not allow such bad and cruel words to pass, for they were false teaching. Turning to the Ruler, and to those who sat on the chief seats with him, He rebuked them, as He had done the Pharisees in a Galilean church less than two years before, when He healed a man's withered hand—

“You hypocrites!” He said. “Do you not on the Sabbath loose your ox or ass from the stable, and lead him away to get water? And shall not this woman—a daughter of Abraham—who hath been bound with this trouble for eighteen years, be loosed from it on the Sabbath day?” The Ruler sat silent on his crimson cushion facing all the people, and could not answer Jesus, for this good woman deserved to be healed, and the people rejoiced when they saw that Jesus prevailed. The woman went back to her place behind the screen, and Jesus resumed teaching, telling them the stories which He had told the people in Galilee, about the Kingdom of Heaven in the

world being like the little Mustard-seed, and about the Leaven in the meal, for Jesus now began to repeat to the people of the Peræa many of the things He had told the people of Galilee.

In another Peræan village, on another Sabbath day, after the forenoon service in the church, the chief Ruler invited Jesus to a mid-day meal of bread and fruit in his house, but it was not through any love for Jesus that he asked Him. There were Lawyers and Pharisees among the guests, and, as was common, poor people came into the open court, and looked in at the windows, and listened and watched at the door. Among these was a man who had dropsy, and when the Pharisees saw him they watched Jesus closely to see if He would do anything to him on the Sabbath. The dinner had not yet begun. The man had evidently followed Jesus in, for he moved about till he stood right before Him, and Jesus knew that the Pharisees were watching Him.

"Is it right," He asked, looking round on all the Teachers and learned men, as He put the same question to them that He had put to the Pharisees in Galilee—"is it right to heal people on the Sabbath day, or is it wrong?" How could they say "No," with the poor suffering man standing before them? yet they dared not say "Yes," and support what Jesus taught; and so they kept silent. With a glance of anger, and without saying one word more, Jesus walked over to the poor man, and putting His hand upon him, healed him, and told him to go home. Turning to the Pharisees, He put the same plain, almost ridiculous question to them which He had put to the Pharisees in other places—

"Which of you, whose ox or ass hath fallen into a well on the Sabbath day, will not at once pull him out on that day?" Now, strange to say, these very men taught the people that one might help a suffering ass, but not heal a sick man on the Sabbath. Again they kept silence rather than answer, for the truth would have helped Jesus. But all who saw them thus silent, knew that Jesus was right, and they were wrong. And this was the eighth time that Jesus publicly broke the Sabbath rules of the Pharisees.

Be not thou like these Pharisees, who were afraid to speak the truth, but speak it, even if it should tell against thee at the time, for it will tell for thee in the end; and do not forget what Jesus taught—that a good act, a good thought, are right at all times, whether it be on Saturday or on the Sabbath.

KINDNESS AND HUMILITY.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

When all was ready in the Ruler's house in the Peræan village, the guests began to take their places for the dinner. The principal table was low, and shaped like a hollow square, open at one side to let the servants go out and in to the middle by, and the guests lay on couches all round the other sides, with their feet pointing towards the wall, their left arms resting on the table, leaving their right arms free. The side of the table at which the master of the house lay was the best side, and it was considered a thing of the greatest consequence in that country that the man of the most importance should have the highest place, and that the man of next importance should be next to him, and so on to the end: but this etiquette of the table was very difficult to arrange without displeasing some one, for among the Pharisees, each thought he deserved a high place. When the guests came to the table, Jesus noticed that instead of giving way to each other, each grave Teacher did all he could to secure a good place for himself and get above the others. Knowing that it made no real difference where He sat, Jesus took the place that was given Him. When the meal of bread, wine, water, figs, raisins, dates, oranges, and other Winter fruits was over, the time for speaking came, and knowing that this scramble for places was only a sign of the foolish pride of these men, Jesus began to tell them what He thought of it, saying—

“When thou art asked by any one to come to a marriage supper, do not go to the highest seat at the table, for perhaps a greater man than thou may come, and he that invited thee

and him will ask thee to give the greater man thy place, and then, feeling ashamed of thyself, thou wilt go and take the lowest place." He thus told them how very foolish their pride looked to those who watched them, and proceeded to tell what they ought rather to do. "When thou art asked to a great supper, go and sit down in the lowest place, and when he that invited thee cometh round to see how all are seated, he will tell thee to go up higher, and then thou wilt be thought well of by all who are at the table." It was the host's duty to see that all were in their right places before the meal began; and Jesus told them the conclusion of the whole in these vigorous words, "Every man who putteth himself forward shall be brought down, and he that is of lowly mind shall be raised up." Now these Pharisees were no believers in humility; for, however meek they tried to appear, they were full of religious pride, thinking themselves better and holier than other people, which is pride of the very worst kind. But there were other men there. Rich men, proud of their money, horses, houses, fine clothes, jewels; and clever men, conceited about their titles, learning, speaking, wisdom; and to them Jesus spoke also, telling them that in all things, humility of spirit is good, and pride is at all times bad. But they did not believe Him. Noticing that all at the table were rich people, friends and relations of the Ruler, who no doubt thought he had done a generous thing in asking in this young Stranger, Jesus spoke particularly to him.

"When thou givest a great dinner or a great supper," He said, "do not ask only thy brothers and relations, thy friends and rich neighbours, lest they also ask thee to dine with them, and so pay thee back." And then He told him that a rich person should give, not dinners to the rich, but dinners to the poor. "When thou givest a dinner," Jesus continued, "ask poor people to it,—the hurt, lame, blind,—and it will make thee truly happy, for they have nothing to pay thee back with, but thou shalt be rewarded in Heaven." This seemed quite shocking to these fine persons, for they believed that to have the hands of such poor people upon their table would defile

it. But it was true kindness which Jesus taught, to feed those who had no food, and not those who had plenty. Hearing Him mention Heaven, one of the guests, perhaps wishing to change the subject, exclaimed—

“Blessed is the man who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of Heaven!” Now, as thou knowest, the Pharisees believed that when the Christ came to the world, His great Kingdom would begin with a banquet to His friends, and they longed to be at it. Jesus did not answer him directly, but told this short story with a meaning as He rested on His couch, at the Ruler’s table—

A rich man gave a great supper, and invited many respectable people, and when all was ready, he sent out his servant to tell them to come in, but they all began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have bought a field, and must go to see it, and I hope he will excuse me.’ The next said, ‘I have bought five pairs of oxen, and I must go and try them; I hope he will excuse me.’ And another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ But none of these were sufficient reasons for staying away. And when the servant came back and told his master all the excuses he had received, his master was angry, and said to him, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring all the hurt, blind, lame, and poor people thou canst find.’ And the servant did as he was told, but still there was room for more; and he said to his master, ‘I have done what thou didst tell me, and yet there is room for more.’ And his master said, ‘Go out into the country, into the highways and hedges, and make the people come in, that my house may be full, for not one of the men whom I first asked, shall taste of my supper.’ And the servant did as he was told, and the poor came gladly to the supper which the rich had rejected.

Jesus did not explain the meaning of this story, which some of the guests thought was only a pretty tale, but this is its meaning. He spoke of the true Kingdom of Heaven, which He was spreading in the world. He was the servant in the story, for He had first spoken to the Jews, Pharisees, priests,

about Heaven ; but they would not hear Him, and then He had turned to the poor people, who heard and followed Him. After this the guests rose and went away, Jesus joining His disciples, who were waiting for Him outside, not having been invited in.

And thou wilt remember that Jesus does not wish thee to be kind only to those who can be kind to thee, but to be kind to those who never can repay thee—the poor hungry boy, the mother and her starving children, the blind, the lame. If thou art ever rich, I trust thou wilt show thy friends what is true kindness, by helping those who need help. For the gratitude of the poor is one of the few blessings which money can obtain.

REJOICING ANGELS.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

While some parts of the Peræa bordering upon the sandy desert to the Eastward were wild and lonely, other parts were not so. The Peræan country is about the size of the county of Cumberland, and a range of high hills runs down the middle of it parallel with the Jordan, with grassy glens and rocky gorges, vine terraces and olive groves, and many mountain streams. Where the land was good there were villages, and in some places large well-built towns, Philadelphia, Gerasa, Bozra, Hesbon, Ramoth-Gilead, with theatres, temples, and fine buildings, and while there were a good many Jews there, most of the people were Arabs and Syrians, who did not worship the God of the Jews. Wherever Jesus went, He continued to be well received, and in the towns and villages large crowds came to hear Him, and many wished to become His followers ; but, like the people of Galilee, they expected that if they followed such a wonderful One, He would reward them in the day of His success with honours and money. Jesus saw that the people of the Peræa must be checked and put right regarding this, as He had done the Galileans at Capernaum ; and turning upon them one day as they crowded round Him, He astonished them with words which meant this—

If any of you follow Me, and doth not love goodness

more than his own father, mother, wife, brother, sister—yes, more than his own life itself, he cannot be a true follower. He had said the same to the people at the Lake of Gennesaret, and He went on to discourage still further, those who for wrong reasons followed Him. “Whoever is not willing,” he continued, “to bear trouble, and come with Me, cannot be a true follower of Me.” He had stopped His thoughtless and false followers at Capernaum, and He would do it here also, for He knew that many of those around Him were not truly on the side of goodness above all things, and He warned them in two stories to consider well what they were doing.

“Which of you,” He said, “who is going to build a house, doth not first count up what it will cost, and see whether he have enough money to finish it, lest after he hath laid the foundations he may find that he is not able to finish it, and all who see it will laugh at him, and say, ‘He began to build a house and is not able to finish it.’” They were thus to apply common sense to the question of whether they had considered all the difficulties of following Jesus and obeying Him. In the second story, He said—

“What king, before going out to fight, doth not first consider whether with ten thousand men he would be able to beat the king who cometh against him with twenty thousand men ; and if he cannot do so, he sendeth messengers to the other king while yet he is a long way off, and asketh for peace.” They were thus not to be less wise in measuring the dangers and difficulties of being like Jesus, than kings are in playing the awful game of war. And he added this warning. “Whoever he may be among you that is not ready to give up all that he hath for My sake, cannot be a true follower of Me. Salt is good, but if it have lost its taste, it cannot be made salt again, and is good neither for the land nor for the rubbish heap ; but is only fit to be thrown away.”

His followers were, therefore, to test themselves, and see whether they were so anxious to be good that they would willingly do whatever Jesus might tell them. No doubt, as at Capernaum, many in the crowd thought that He would never

do any good with such teaching, and would turn and leave Him, going back to their hoeing in the fields, their vine-planting, their sheep-rearing, thinking how much better they were, poor, and in a cottage of their own, than trying to follow the teaching of Jesus, with no prospect of tangible rewards before their eyes ; but there were some who felt that what He had given them was more than pearls could buy, and that they would never turn their backs upon Him, nor cease to strive after goodness as He taught it. He was so different from their own Teachers. He spoke to the poor and the bad, and went into their houses, and ate and drank with them ; whereas the Pharisee Teachers taught only the well-to-do and the respectable, those who went to church, who gave money to the Temple, who acknowledged all their teaching to be right in the abstract, who gave right answers to their questions, and only needed looking after in such matters as hand-washing, Sabbath-keeping, fasting, praying, and tithe-giving, which they were apt to neglect. But the outcasts who gathered the taxes, who begged, who stole, who did not go to church, who worked on the Sabbath, who paid no attention to the little rules of the Pharisees—these men were called accursed, lost in badness, and they would not speak to them ; while in return the people hated their proud sanctimonious Teachers. And when the Pharisees saw the tax-gatherers and bad persons crowding to Jesus, and He going with them, they exclaimed, just as the Pharisees at Capernaum did when He went to dine in the tax-gatherer's house—

“This man meeteth bad people, and eateth with them.” They could not get near Him for the numbers of people with whom they would not mix lest their clothes might touch them, and they be defiled ; and yet Jesus touched them and ate food with them ! But He answered them with the story about the shepherd and the sheep, which He had told to His disciples in Galilee over a year before, and which meant, that if the Pharisees thought themselves so very good, there was no use in coming to Him, for He only cared to speak to those who felt that they were bad and wished to be good. And many of the men who listened

were shepherds, who fed their sheep upon the hills of Gilead, of Pisgah, and of Ammon, or in the wilderness down by the Dead Sea, where they were in danger from wild animals attacking them.

“Which of you,” He said, “that hath an hundred sheep, if he should lose one of them, would not leave the ninety-nine in the lonely place and seek for the lost one until he find it? And when he hath found it, would not put it upon his shoulders and carry it back rejoicing?” What a pretty picture? The shepherd leaving the flock crowded together, guarded by his fierce yellow dogs, to follow the footprints and listen for the bleating of the straying one. The strong man returning with the young sheep on his shoulders, climbing up from a deep tangled gorge, or coming cautiously down the rocky hillside, to restore the wanderer to its companions. “And when he getteth his flock home,” Jesus continued, “he calleth his friends and neighbours together, and telleth them to rejoice with him, for he hath found the sheep which was lost.” Then, turning to those Pharisees who were standing listening, “I tell you,” He said, “there is more joy in Heaven over one bad person that becometh good, than over ninety-nine good persons who do not need to change.” This story displeased the Pharisees, for they thought in their pride that they of course were the good people who did not need to change, and that the common people were the bad ones; and they were annoyed to hear Him say that one of these despised people would enter Heaven with more joy than they, and they turned away in anger; but Jesus went on to tell this other short story about a lost silver coin—like a shilling—

“What poor woman who hath only ten silver coins, if she should lose one, would not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and search carefully until she find it?” Now the houses of these poor people had only one room, with an earthen floor, and no windows, and only lighted by the door, and a shilling was a large sum to them. “And when the woman hath found her silver coin,” Jesus continued, “she will ask her friends and neighbours in to rejoice with her because she had found

the money which was lost." Then, looking to the Pharisees, He added, "I tell you, in the same way, there is joy among the angels of Heaven over one bad person that becometh good."

And thou wilt remember that pride is to be put away from thee as thou wouldst put away anything that would destroy thine eyesight ; and that thou shouldst take to thee lowliness and modesty, and be like the silver star that is content to light up its little corner in the blue sky, though no eye should ever single it out from the thousands of others that sparkle round it.

THE ERRING BROTHER.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

Jesus told yet another story to the people in the Peræan village in the presence of the Pharisees, to show the difference between persons who have been bad and are sorry for it, and those who have never done such wicked things. It was about a son who behaved very badly, and yet who was forgiven by his kind father. And this is the story.

A rich man had two sons, and the younger of them came and said, "My father, give me now the share of thy money that will come to me." Now the share that he would get when his father died would be one-third of all that his father had, his elder brother getting two-thirds.

And the father gave him his share of all that he had, and in a few days the younger son gathered it together and went away into a distant country, and there he spent and squandered it among bad people who were glad to help him to spend it. And when it was all gone, food became scarce in that country, and he could not get anything to eat without working for it. His friends left him, and he had to go to one of the people of the place and offer to work, and he sent him out into the fields to herd swine. Now that was the lowest kind of work that a Jew could be set to, for they hated swine ; and what he was paid for his work was not enough to buy food for himself. Some days he was so hungry that he would like to have eaten the

husky pods of the carob tree, which the swine ate, for nobody gave him food, and often he thought of his father's rich house and well-fed servants, but he was afraid to return home, after what he had done. So He followed the swine over these strange fields and through the woods, until one day as he sat tired and starving, with his swine stick in his hand, he came to his right mind, and resolved to return home, saying to himself—

“My father's paid servants have plenty of food, and here am I, perishing from hunger! I will rise and go to my father, and say, ‘My father, I have done wrong against Heaven and thee, and do not any more deserve to be called thy son; make me one of thy paid servants.’” He now felt how foolish and cruel he had been, and was sorry for his badness, and he gave up herding the swine, and set out to walk wearily back to his father's country. Now in some parts of that country the ground is so flat and the air so clear, that a friend can be seen at a long distance, and his father, who had been watching every day for his son to come back, while he was still a long way off, saw him returning wearily home, and knew his own boy, and ran to meet him, and put his arms about his neck and kissed him much.

“My father,” said the son humbly, as he stood before him in his ragged swine-herd's clothes, “I have done wrong against Heaven and thee, and do not any more deserve to be called thy son——” But his father would not let him say anything more, but seeing his sorrow and regret, he called joyfully to his servants at the house—

“Bring out the best cloak quickly and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring in the fatted calf and kill it, and let us feast and make merry to-night, for this my son whom I thought was dead is alive again, and he who was lost is found!” His joy was so great that he would not let his son finish his sorrowful speech, but took him into the house to have him bathed and stripped of his rags and properly dressed, and ordered a feast, and called in his friends to rejoice with him over his son's return.

Now the elder brother was out working in the distant fields when his brother returned, and when he came home from his work in the evening, and got near the house, he heard the sound of music and the shouts of dancing in the open court, and asked a servant what it meant, for he had not heard of his brother's return.

"Thy brother hath come back," replied the servant, "and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath him back safe and sound again." This should have been glad news to the brother who had stayed at home. But no! He was angry, and would not go into the house, and some one told his father that his elder son was offended and would not come in. And the father came out and begged him to come in and welcome back his erring brother, but he answered gloomily—

"I have served thee for many years, and have not disobeyed thee, and thou hast never given me even a young goat that I might feast and make merry with my friends; but when this thy son cometh back, after spending thy money in bad company, thou killest for him a fatted calf!" This was only a childish excuse, for he could have had a kid at any time if he had wished, and he showed his dislike to his brother by calling him "thy son," as though he did not think him fit to be his brother. But the kind father was as gentle with the one erring son as with the other.

"My son," he replied, "thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine. It is right that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was as one dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." How gently the father reminds him by the words "thy brother" that He had spoken unkindly.

The Pharisees listened for more, but the story was ended, and they were left to wonder what it meant, and whether it was pointed at them. Who was the erring brother, and who was the sullen one? Surely the sanctimonious brother was the Pharisees, who said they kept all the commandments, and were too good to eat food at a table with tax-gatherers and common people, and who would not rejoice when had people became sorry for their faults. Jesus Himself

was the kind father, who wished both Pharisees and tax-gatherers to meet together as brothers.

And do not thou forget that though a person may be as foolish and bad as this younger son in the story, if he be truly sorry for what he has done, and asketh to be forgiven, God will welcome him to a life of goodness, for He loveth us all, both bad and good.

THE MONEY-GOD.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

Two things the Pharisees loved—respectability and money. They believed that rich people were the favourites of Heaven, and sought after money so much, and took such bad ways to get it, that Jesus told them money was their god, and the cause of wickedness. Even His disciples had wrong ideas of the use of money, and the next story which Jesus told as He went among the Peræan villages, was about *the dishonest servant* and money, and He told it to His disciples before the Pharisees.

“There was once a rich man,” He said, “who had fields, gardens, and houses, and he had a chief servant to whom he gave charge of everything while he was away—lands, rents, crops, wine, oil,—with power to take less from those who could not pay their whole debts; and some one told him that this servant was wasting his property. And the rich man called the servant before him, and said, ‘What is this I hear of thee? Give me an account of thy management, for thou canst no longer be my servant.’” He was thus to give an account of all he had done, before being sent away. And the servant thought—

“‘What shall I do when my master hath put me away? I cannot dig, and I am ashamed to beg. I know what I will do! so that when I am put away I may have friends who will take me into their houses.’” And he resolved to give presents of his master’s things to people, and so make friends of men as bad as himself, who would think him a kind man. So the

servant ordered every one who owed his master anything to come and see him.

“ ‘How much owest thou my master?’ ” he asked the first who came. Now this man was a tenant of an olive-garden, who paid his rent in oil, and he answered—

“ ‘An hundred measures of oil.’ ”

“ ‘Take thy paper,’ said the dishonest servant to him, kindly, ‘and sit down quickly, and write fifty instead of an hundred.’ ” And the tenant, who was as dishonest as the servant, did as he was told, and gave him the paper back to show to his master. Thus the servant made one friend ; and turning to another—

“ ‘And how much owest thou?’ ” he asked graciously. And this tenant, who grew grain on his land, answered—

“ ‘An hundred measures of wheat.’ ”

“ ‘Take this paper and pen, and write eighty instead of an hundred,’ ” the servant said. And the man did as he was told, and handed the servant back the paper. And the servant did the same with all who owed his master anything, and made quite a number of friends by giving away what was not his own to give. Having arranged all his papers, he then made up a false account, and gave it to his master ; but his master knew all about his last acts of dishonesty, and sent him away with sharp words of mock praise for having been so clever at his expense, saying that men like him thought they were wiser and cleverer than honest men. And so ended the story of how a man by wicked cleverness thought he could preserve his respectability in the world ; but that kind of cleverness is not wisdom, it is only foolish wickedness. Then speaking directly to the Pharisees, Jesus upbraided them, telling them that they were trying to reconcile badness with goodness, worship of money with worship of God, in words which made them angry, for it was like telling them to imitate the dishonest servant of whom they all had disapproved.

“ I say to you,” Jesus said, “make friends to yourselves by means of the money-god of wickedness, so that when it shall fail you, these friends may receive you into their

homes." They hated to hear Him speak of their love of money in this way ; but He continued, "Whoever may be trusted in a very little, may be trusted in much ; and whoever is bad in a very little will be bad also in much. If you have not been faithful to your money-god, who will trust you with true riches ? And if you have not been faithful in the things which belong to another, who will trust you with that which is your own ?" Thus far He had been taunting these money-worshippers with their own folly, pointing out the stupidity of their belief in riches as a sign of God's favour ; but now His tone changed, and with a warning voice He said—

"A servant cannot obey two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or keep to the one and leave the other. *You cannot serve both God and money.*" They were thus left to choose whether they would love God or love money, for they could not do both. But the Pharisees only shouted mocking and impudent things to Jesus, for they believed that money would help them to have Heaven ; and they would not change for anything He might say. To their scoffing He replied in words which stung them back—

"You are the men," He said, "who make people think you are good, but God knoweth your hearts, for badness like yours, though it is thought much of by men, is hateful to God. Before John came, men had the Bible ; but since then I have spoken of the Kingdom of Heaven in the world, and men think they can press into it. But it is easier for sky and earth to pass away, than for any part of God's law to fail." And in a few more words He told these Pharisees, who pretended to be perfect keepers of God's law, that they broke it when it suited themselves, putting away their wife and taking another on very slight excuses, and that this was shameful and wicked conduct. And He went on to speak of the rights of women in a way which had never been heard of before, and which with what He said about a month afterwards, made Jesus the special friend of the women of the country.

And thou wilt remember that badness, however secret and successful it may be, is only cheating and folly, although

it may pass for cleverness ; and choose early, betwixt loving money and loving true goodness, for thou canst not love them both.

THE RICH MAN AND THE BEGGAR.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

Jesus had warned the Pharisees of the Peræa against their love of money, and their belief that it would help them to be good and have Heaven, and they had only laughed at Him ; but now He told them a story of a rich man and a beggar, and of how the beggar entered Heaven after death, but the rich man did not. This was to show that wealth makes some people bad rather than good. Heaven He pictured in the story as a place of joy and beauty, the house of God, and Hades as a place of sorrow and gloom ; and this is what He said—

There was once a rich man who dressed himself in purple cloth and fine linen, and lived surrounded with splendour, and ate the choicest food. Now purple cloth and white linen was the dress of princes, and he spent his days in looking after his own comforts. And a poor beggar, called Lazarus, was often carried to the gate of this rich man's house and laid there ; and he was ill with sores on his body, and begged that he might get the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table ; and the street dogs used to come and lick his sore places. The rich man saw him lying helplessly there in the sunshine, as he rode out and in by the gate of his fine gardens, and he was not kind to him, and did not think of his misery. But the street dogs, poor harmless brutes, were the poor man's friends, and he used to stroke them with his feeble hand, and give them a few of his crumbs to eat. And so the days went past in feasting and pleasure to the rich man, and weariness and pain to the beggar.

But at length the beggar died, and his spirit entered Heaven ; and perhaps the rich man missed him from the gate one morning, but he soon forgot all about him. Time passed on, and the rich man also died. All that money could

do was done for him. Paid mourners gave him a splendid funeral and made speeches at his grave, praising him ; while others wept and mourned and played wailing music upon flutes and beat melancholy drums ; and others turned the seats and tables in the house upside down and tore their clothes and hair, and put dust on their heads, in imitation of sorrow, for about a month ; and then there were rejoicings in honour of his brother the heir.

But his spirit did not enter Heaven. In Hades he lifted up his eyes in pain, and saw Abraham far away in Heaven, and the beggar Lazarus with him. Now Hades is the place to which men's spirits go that do not enter Heaven after death ; and the rich man who had not been the beggar's friend on earth, wished to claim friendship now.

"Father Abraham !" he cried, "have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in great pain in this fire."

"My son," Abraham replied, "remember that thou hadst riches during thy life, and that Lazarus had poverty ; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. Also between us and thee there is a great deep space, so that they who wish to pass hence to thee are not able, nor can any one come from thee to us." Loving spirits would have come down even from their beautiful Heaven, to sooth these spirits in Hades, but they could not, for it was impossible ; and while these in Hades could see those pure spirits in Heaven, they could not go near them. But the selfishness of the rich man became changed. He thought of his brothers who were living, as he had done, in the world, and he cried again to Abraham—

"Father," he said, "I beg thee to send Lazarus to my father's house on earth, for I have five brothers, that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of pain." He was sorry for his selfish life, and wished his brothers to change and become good while they lived. But Abraham answered—

"They have the words of Moses and the good men in the Bible ; let them read them." But the rich man remembered

what little thought he had ever given to all the wise and good things in the Bible.

"Nay, Father Abraham," he pleaded, "but if a spirit from the dead were to go to my brothers, they would change."

"If they pay no heed to Moses and the prophets," replied Abraham, "they would not be persuaded to change, even if a spirit were to go to them from the dead." His words quenched the little flame of hope that had flickered over the head of the rich man, and as he sank back among the companion spirits of Hades, he thought with horror of the careless lives which his brothers were living in the world, under the vain belief that they were making merry and enjoying life. This was only a story with a meaning, a sort of vision, but it is one of the most startling of the stories of Jesus, in which He opens the golden gates of Heaven and the leaden doors of Hades, as a warning to men to be good. Told in the presence of the rich and the poor, it must have had a strange effect, for He let them know that to be rich did not mean to be good; nor being poor, to be bad; but that the opposite was oftener the case. And that after death men will be in joy or in pain according as they have lived good or bad lives here.

Therefore, be thou kind to the poor, and if thou canst not give them food, clothing, or money, give them gentle words; and may it never be said of thee that thou didst add one grain of misery to the heavy burdens which the poor have to bear.

Little deeds of kindness,
Little acts of love,
Make the world around us
Like the Heaven above.

ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES.

PERÆA, WINTER, A.D. 33.

After telling the story of the rich man and the beggar to the Pharisees who trusted in riches, Jesus ceased speaking in the open air and went into a house with His disciples. In private with them, perhaps sitting in the evening in a quiet

room, with the stars sparkling in the sky and the sharp crescent of the moon seen through the open door, He explained some of the things which He had said, with fuller confidence than He could have used before the Pharisees. He warned His disciples that they would be tempted by bad people to do wrong.

"It is not possible," He said, "but that temptations to do wrong shall come to you, but woe! to him through whom they come;" repeating, as He pointed to the little children on the floor, the same words of caution which He gave them before in Peter's house. "It were better for a man that a mill stone were tied round his neck, and he thrown into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to do wrong." He also repeated to them the warning to forgive each other, which he gave them on the same occasion after their quarrel on the road to Capernaum—

"Take care what thou doest. If thy brother hurt thee, tell him what he hath done, and if he is sorry for it forgive him. And if he hurt thee seven times a day, and seven times turn again to thee and say that he is sorry, thou shalt forgive him." He meant that they were always to be willing to forgive an injury. Talking among themselves over this, the disciples felt that they needed help if they were to live the good life which Jesus continually set before them, and not to be tempted from goodness, and like children they exclaimed—

"Master, give us more faith!" To which He replied, using a figure of speech that He had often used before about removing mountains—

"If you had faith, even as small as a mustard seed, you could tell this sycamore tree," pointing as He spoke to a large green tree which grew near them, "to be rooted up and planted in the sea, and it would obey you." He did not mean that they could cause trees to leap into the sea, but only that they would be able to do great things if they trusted in goodness. Lest they might think that they deserved much praise for being His disciples, He told them this story about not expecting praise for doing what is right, and what they ought to do, saying—

“Which of you that hath a servant ploughing or watching sheep in the field, would tell him when he cometh in from his work to sit down at the table and eat. Wouldst thou not rather tell him to make ready food that thou mightest eat, and prepare himself and wait upon thee till thou wast done, and after that to eat and drink himself?”—meaning, that though this might seem hard, still it was only the servant’s duty to do so; adding this question: “Would the master thank his servant because he did what he was told to do?” And on the disciples answering “No,” He went on to tell them that they must be like good servants, doing what is right, because they love right and hate wrong, and not doing it for praise and thanks.

“And so you,” He continued, “even after you have done all that I have told you to do, may say, ‘We are unprofitable servants, who have done no more than it was our duty to do.’” And yet, while the disciples were not to feel proud in having done their duty, there is no doubt that their duty, humbly done, was the best service which they could render Jesus.

And thou, too, must do thy little duties to the best of thy strength, and in thy sweet child’s struggle to do right and keep from wrong, Jesus will help thee. But what is thy duty? Hurt no living thing, spoil no beautiful thing, say no unkind thing; forgive, be kind, be loving, be truthful, be joyful, and do not *think* thyself very good, *but be good*.

HEAVEN IS WITHIN YOU.

PERÆA, ‘SPRING, A.D. 34.

We are coming to the last weeks of Jesus’ life. I have hitherto tried to explain all His sayings, but in these latter weeks He spoke much of future things, in language which I cannot understand and shall not guess at; but I shall give as plainly as I can His sayings as they have come down to us from those who heard Him speak. It is not of much moment, nor can it be expected, that we should understand all that Jesus

said, particularly about the end of the world, and His coming again. If it were so, He would have made His meaning plainer; but yet, while not attaching too definite meanings to things which are like visions, and have no close relation to us, it is right that thou shouldst know about them.

He had now been teaching in the Peræan village for over two months, and was about to begin His last, slow, memorable journey back to the fords of Jordan, and up by Jericho to Jerusalem, which He would enter at the approaching Passover Festival amid great rejoicing—a journey marked by gentle teaching, loving incidents, and stories by the way. The curiosity of the Pharisees increased every day, for Jesus had said that His Kingdom would be declared at Jerusalem; and one day a little group of them came to ask Him yet one more question. They wished to know what would be the sign of the coming of His Kingdom of Heaven, for they believed it would be accompanied by many wonders, if He were the true Christ. But they could not understand His answer. It was too deep; and went against all their ideas.

“The Kingdom of Heaven,” Jesus answered them, “cometh not with looking for it, neither shall men say, Look here! or Look there! *for Heaven is within you.*” He meant that the Kingdom of Heaven was not a thing outside of them, which they could see, as the Pharisees thought, but that it was a state of the mind and spirit, a change from bad to good, which would be felt, but could not be seen, for it was within them. Through Him their spirits would learn to know God, and become obedient to Him—which is Heaven. And so His Kingdom would spread among the people and over the world, as men, women, and little children entered it, and became His subjects. A very different kind of Kingdom from what the Pharisees looked for, of cities, riches, and power, who thought that the Kingdom of Heaven in the world would be established by a king with armies, not by going about healing and teaching the common people. When they went away, Jesus spoke gravely to His disciples, telling them that He would be killed at Jerusalem, whither they were going, but that He

would rise from the grave, and go to His Father in Heaven, and would come again. But His words are so strange and mysterious, that even after all that has happened since then, it is impossible to tell clearly what He meant. He said that after He was dead, men would come time after time, saying that they were the Christ, but that people were not to be deceived by them.

"The time will come," He said, "when you shall wish to see one of My days and shall not see it. They shall say to you, Look here! and Look there! but go not away to follow after them. For like the lightning which flasheth out of one part of the sky and shineth unto the other, so shall my coming be. But first I must suffer many things, and be rejected by the men of this time"—meaning that He would be killed at Jerusalem, for He knew that if He continued His great work of teaching, the priests would have Him put to death for it.

He spoke also of what would happen when He should come again. That there would be many bad and few good men, as in the time written of in the beginning of the Bible, where it says a flood came upon the world, and only Noah and his family were saved in a great boat called the Ark; and like the time also mentioned there, when two wicked cities were destroyed by fire, saying—

"As it was in the time of Noah, so shall it be in My day. Men ate, drank, and married, until the day that Noah went into the ark, and then the waters came and drowned all the people. And as it was in the time of Lot, men ate, drank, bought, sold, planted, and builded, until the day that he went out of Sodom, when it rained fire and brimstone from the skies, and destroyed all who remained; so shall it be in the day when I shall be made known. In that day, whoever shall be on the house-top, let him not go inside to take things out of his house; and whoever is in the field, let him not return home, but flee. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; but whoever shall lose his life shall save it." The story about Lot's wife is, that as they were flying away from Sodom, she looked

back, wishing to return, and became a pillar of salt. Jesus told them then how people would be separated; continuing, "In that night there shall be two men in one bed, and the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill stones together, and the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field together, and the one shall be taken and the other left." The disciples were listening with breathless interest to these strange sayings, and when they heard Him speak of people being taken away to meet Him, they exclaimed—

"Where, Master?" But He did not tell them, only answering—

"Where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." Referring to the great birds called vultures that in that country come flying in crowds to the bodies of animals that have died in lonely places.

The lesson for thee, my child, in these strange sayings, is to be watchful not to attach exclusive importance to a few words or even lines of the Bible, but ever to believe and trust the whole broad spirit of that Book. When thou art older, men may tell thee that these strange words of Jesus are foolishness; but wise people think very reverently of every word which Jesus spoke. If they cannot understand them, they may put them on one side; for thou wilt remember that it is not necessary that thou shouldst understand all that is written of Him, but it is well for thee to know every word.

THE DOOR OF HEAVEN.

PERÆA, SPRING, A.D. 34.

Another Winter had gone, and Spring returned, with green grass and young wheat springing in the fields, and birds singing as they built their nests in the forks of the trees amid bursting buds and soft green leaves. The gardens were sweet with the scent of blooming fruit trees, the fields again beautiful with wild flowers, but Jesus would not see the coming Summer, for in about six weeks' time He would be killed. As He went

slowly through the green paths of the Peræa, walking towards the Jordan river, He told those who followed Him of the difficulties that were before them all, but that they would have Heaven; and as they talked over His words, some thought that very few people would have Heaven, while others thought that many would do so, and one day they asked Jesus this question—

“Master! do only a few enter Heaven?” He did not answer “Yes,” or “No”; but told them to be careful more about having Heaven themselves than curious to know how many others would do so, adding, that Heaven was like a beautiful house with a narrow door.

“Strive,” He said to the people, “Strive to go in by this narrow door, for many shall try to enter in, but shall not be able.” He then told them that He was at the door to open it, and that they should listen to Him before it became too late.

“When I,” He said, “the Master of the House of Heaven, shall rise and shut the door, and you shall begin to stand outside and knock, and say, ‘Lord! open to us.’ Then I shall answer, ‘I do not know you, nor whence you are.’ And you shall begin to say, ‘We ate and drank with Thee, and Thou didst teach in our streets.’ But I shall answer, ‘I tell you I do not know you, nor whence you are. Depart from Me, all you who do wickedness.’” And He told them that they who were shut out would weep for sorrow when they saw those whom they knew, in Heaven, while they were not; and that people would come from all parts of the earth, East, West, North, South, into God’s beautiful House of Heaven, which the Jews thought was for them alone. Thus He told them once more what had so enraged the people of Galilee, that Heaven was not for Jews only, but for the people of all nations.

While the Pharisees in the Peræa did not like the teaching of Jesus, they did not behave so harshly to Him as the Pharisees of Judæa and Galilee. They listened, and differed from Him, but they did not try to catch Him with their rules, nor to persecute Him with petty annoyances; but

now that He was leaving their country, they sought to hasten His going. He was in the country of the cruel King Antipas, the wretch who killed John the Baptist, and who wished Jesus to come and visit him ; and the Pharisees, knowing something of the king's intentions, came to Jesus with a show of real friendliness, and said—

“Get away from here, and out of our country, for the king wisheth to kill Thee.” This did not frighten Jesus. Turning calmly to them, He gave them this message to deliver to their weak and wicked king, if they chose.

“Go and tell that cunning fox, that to-day and to-morrow I shall heal people, and the third day I am perfected. I must go on My way to Jerusalem to-day, to-morrow, and the day after, for it cannot be that I shall die outside that city.” And as He named the name of Jerusalem, a crowd of memories came over Him, of all that He had tried to do for the people of that city, of how they had killed good men in the past, and would kill Him too. He loved the city which was the hope of all good Jews, and which held the Temple of their God.

“O Jerusalem ! Jerusalem !” He exclaimed, “which killed the good men of the past, and stoneth them that are sent to thee ! How often would I have gathered thy children together unto Me, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not. See how thy house is left desolate ! I say thou shalt not see Me, until thou criest, ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.’” Thou hast seen a hen calling her chickens when a dog, or hawk, or other danger is near. How they creep under her wings and remain there safely sheltered. These words of Jesus are taken from the 118th Psalm, one of the favourite Psalms which the people sung at their Festivals, and are the words which His friends from Galilee shouted about a month later at the Pass-over Festival as He rode into Jerusalem.

And thou, my child, wilt remember that there is a time when thou canst hear the voice of Jesus calling thee to enter Heaven, but that if thou wilt not listen nor be guided by Him,

the time will come when that gentle voice will cease to move thee.

MORNING PRAYERS.

PERÆA, SPRING, A.D. 34.

Jesus had told His disciples that they ought to pray frequently and earnestly, because praying to and trusting in God would make them strong, brave, and faithful, and that they were not to cease praying if they did not get what they wanted, for whether they got what they asked or no, praying itself would do them good. But they were to use common sense in praying; and He told them this story with a meaning, about *An unjust judge*; and thou wilt bear in mind that there were then two judges in Jerusalem who were each paid more than £200 a year for doing justice, and that they did not always do it.

“There was in a city,” Jesus said, “a judge who cared neither for God nor for man; and there was a widow in that city, and she came often to him, saying—

“‘Do justice for me, against mine opponent.’” She asked only what was fair and right, but perhaps the judge was lazy, perhaps he wanted a present of money from her, but day after day she came and asked the same thing, until the judge saw that he must attend to her.

“Though I care neither for God nor man,” he said to himself, “yet because this woman troubleth me every day I will do justice for her against her opponent, lest she weary me with coming so often.” And so to stop her from annoying him with her prayers and tears, this unjust judge did as she wished. And Jesus called the attention of His disciples to what the judge in the story did, saying—

“Notice what this unjust judge said and did;” meaning, that even a bad judge will listen to one who will not stop nor be turned away. “And shall not God,” Jesus added, “do what is right for His own ones who pray to Him by day and by night, and whom He loveth? I say to you, that God will

do justice quickly for them." And then, as if thinking over all that He had said and done during His three years of teaching, with a touch of sadness He asked His disciples this strange question—

"And yet, when I come again, shall I find any faith in the world?" And He left them to think over it; but they could give Him no answer, for this is one of His sayings which we do not understand.

Among those who came to listen to Jesus on this His last journey towards the Fords of Jordan, were some people, most likely Pharisees, who thought they were so good that they did not need any teaching from Him, nor to have His Spirit, and that they were sure of Heaven; and they looked down on other people as being far beneath them. They were very careful to obey all the rules of the Lawyers, particularly the rules about the Sabbath. They would not eat an egg which a hen laid on the Sabbath, nor would they carry a loaf of bread, nor wear shoes with nails on that day; but they enjoyed themselves on the Sabbath all the same, and had many ingenious ways of avoiding keeping rules which they did not like. Seeing some of these cold, self-righteous men listening, but still keeping out of the crowd lest their cloaks might be defiled by the common people, Jesus turned to them, and told them a beautiful story about a proud Pharisee and a humble tax-gatherer, who went together to the Golden Temple to pray. This is the story—

Two men went up to the Temple to pray. The one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. They would go up in the morning, at the hour when, at the sound of silver trumpets blown by the priests inside, all the beautiful doors were thrown open, when the morning sacrifice smoked upon the great stone altar, and the white-robed priests, putting aside the outer veil of blue and scarlet, showed the golden door of the sanctuary with the golden vine over it, through which they passed into the holy place to trim the lighted candles, and throw incense upon the fire that glowed upon the altar of gold until the whole gilded chamber was filled with a sweet

heavy odour. The Pharisee, with white turban and naked feet, would walk to the utmost limits of the men's court, the numerous blue and white threads of the tassels of his cloak reminding him of the many commands of the Law ; while tied upon his brow and left arm were little vellum boxes containing verses of the Bible, called his phylacteries, made large, as a special sign of his goodness. Coming after him, the tax-gatherer stood at the back of the court, not caring to go further in. With faces turned towards the golden splendour of the Holy place, the two men waited the signal for prayer. When it came, the Pharisee stood, and lifting up his eyes to the sanctuary that shone on the terrace above them, he prayed thus with himself—

“God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men, oppressors, unjust, wicked, or even like yonder tax-gatherer. On two days of the week I take no food, and I give one-tenth part of all that I get, to the priests and the Temple.” And then he ended. But, had he been praying? He had only been talking to himself, saying how good he was, and how much better than other people. But the tax-gatherer, standing far off from the Holy place, and not so much as lifting up his eyes to it, struck his breast with his hand, as he said—

“God be merciful to me, a sinner,” for he felt that he was bad, and was very sorry for it, and prayed earnestly to God to forgive him. Again the silver trumpets sounded, and with beating cymbals, the immense choir of Levites and singing boys, who crowded the fifteen marble steps that led to the Priests' court, sang the psalms for the day, filling the whole Temple with music. And the Pharisee walked past the tax-gatherer with sweeping robes and head high, cold and proud, away to his beautiful house in the upper part of the town ; while the tax-gatherer, resolving to be a better man, went away down to the lower streets of shops and markets to do his daily work. And Jesus told the people what was the difference between these two men.

“I tell you,” He said, “that this tax-gatherer went down

to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. For every one who is proud shall be humbled, and every one that is lowly shall be raised up"—using nearly the same words as He used to the Pharisees when they were trying who should get the highest seats at the Ruler's table a few weeks before.

And thou, my child, wilt remember never to compare thy goodness with thy neighbours' faults, but to compare it with the pure life of Jesus, for that will make thee gentle in judging thy companions; for thou never canst tell how they have been taught or tempted, or whether thou wouldst have been any better than they, hadst thou been in their place.

WIVES AND MOTHERS.

PERÆA, SPRING, A.D. 34.

Once more the Pharisees of the Peræa came to Jesus with a question, and it was the last they would ask Him before He left their country. A little over a month before, He had spoken about married people, and had said that the Pharisees put away their wives whenever they wished, in a way that was very wrong. Now the question of marriage had caused much wrangling amongst Pharisees, their two chief teachers taking different sides. Hallel said that a man might put away a wife for very slight reasons, such as, if she had cooked his dinner badly, or if he liked another woman better, or had ceased to love her; while Shammai said that a husband could only put away his wife for being unfaithful. They never thought of discussing for what reasons a *wife* might put away her *husband*; for women were looked upon as the toys, slaves, servants of men, and a wife could be bought for money. Girls were taught that their husbands were to be their masters, and women were not allowed to sit with men in Church, nor even to walk with them to it, but had to go by a back way, and no one thought of saying that woman was man's equal.

But Jesus had already shown that He thought differently of women. At Sychar He astonished His own disciples by talk-

ing to the woman at the well ; in Galilee He shocked Simon the Pharisee by allowing Mary Magdalene to kiss His feet ; in the Temple He surprised the people by speaking kindly to the poor woman who had been brought for punishment ; a month ago He blamed the Pharisees for treating their wives so cruelly ; and now He was asked to say what He thought of the rights of women in marriage. Spring time is advancing, and the sun is hot in the valley of the Jordan, and He stands in the shade of a green tree speaking to the people, as the Pharisees come to Him.

“Is it right,” they asked, “for a man to put away his wife for any reason ?” They wished to put Jesus into a difficulty, for most of the men there, thought that they had a right to put away one wife and marry another, just as they might change a servant. Jesus answered with a question, asking them if they had not read in their Bibles how that God, when He made the world, made also men and women, and that when a man married he was to leave his mother and father and live with his wife, and they were ever after to be like one person. So that men were not to think that they could be separated from their wives whenever they wished ; and He added these solemn words—

“What God hath joined together, let not man separate.” And thus He answered the Pharisees out of the same Bible, which they pretended to know and teach to others. But the Pharisees could quote a rule of Moses against the Bible, and replied briskly, saying—

“Moses hath allowed us to put away our wives, if we give them a letter saying that we have put them away forever.” But Jesus answered that it was because of their hard selfish hearts towards women that Moses had given them such a rule ; that it had not always been so, for there was the Law of God, of which He had already spoken, which had been from the beginning of the world, and which was higher than the rule of Moses, and it said that a man must be to his wife as if they were one person. And He repeated again what He had told the people on Mount Hattin, three

years before, that there was only one thing for which married people could be separated—unfaithfulness to each other—and that if a man were to send away his wife for any other reason, she would still be his wife, and he might not marry another woman.

His words were so just and so wise, that the Pharisees could make no reply, and went away in silence. Thus we find Jesus telling these proud Pharisees that their wives were as good as they—that a wife has a claim upon her husband, equal to the husband's claim upon her; for, to Jesus, woman was not man's inferior, or servant, or toy, but *a living soul*, and man's equal. And this truth has so spread, that wherever Christianity is taught, one of its first effects is to place woman upon an equality with man, and to establish her moral and intellectual independence. When the crowd went away, and Jesus went into the house to rest, His disciples came round Him to ask questions about this strange new thing which He had said about the rights of women; for they too had always regarded a wife as the servant of her husband, a thing to be bought for little or much, according to her beauty and cleverness, and to be sent away at any time the man wished, with a letter in her hand, and some money.

"Since it is so," the disciples said, "that a man cannot put away his wife, it is not wise for men to marry at all?" The idea of being married for life to one woman was so new to them, that they seriously asked Jesus whether it would not be better for men never to marry. Evidently they could not be got to understand how this could ever be right, for, after repeating to His disciples much of what He had already told the Pharisees, Jesus said—

"Everybody cannot understand this, but only they to whom it is given." And He named a few kinds of men who ought not to marry, all others being free to marry if they wished.

When thou, my child, seest the sweet faces of fair women in our streets, and hearest their gentle voices wherever thou dost go, I would have thee remember how much our mothers and sisters owe of the liberty and happiness of their lives, and

of the sanctity of their homes, to Him who so long ago spoke to the Pharisees of the Peræa, of their equal rights with men.

HE BLESSES THE LITTLE CHILDREN.

PERÆA, SPRING, A.D. 34.

We come now to another very beautiful picture in the life of Jesus, and in it He is surrounded with children.

The news of what He had said to the Pharisees about a man having no right to put away his wife whenever he liked, was carried into the homes of the people, and there the mothers heard, and talked about it. The women of that country loved Jesus. Amid all the unkindness shown to Him during the three last years of His life, we do not hear of an unkind word, deed, or thought, from a woman; but, on the contrary, we read of them following Him, giving Him presents, inviting Him in, blessing Him, bringing their children to Him, exclaiming against His death, weeping for Him, and mourning at His grave. Their hearts pitied the young Teacher, so gentle, so beautiful, who bade their husbands love and respect them, and said that Heaven was the home of little children. Their purer spirits seemed clearer to discern the Spirit of God that was in Him.

It was a common thing for mothers to bring their children to an old Teacher that he might put his hands upon their heads and say that he hoped they would be good children; and the mothers of the Peræa wished to bring their children to Jesus that He also might bless them. They heard He was about to leave their country, perhaps to be killed in Jerusalem, and with a strange show of interest and affection, these humble enslaved mothers of the children of that land, bade Him farewell. Spring was advancing. The prickly bushes of the pomegranate were bright with bell-shaped flowers of orange-red, swallows with white breasts and flickering wings were skimming the tree shaded pools, and as He passed through one of their villages, and sat by the wayside in the shadow of a

green sycamore tree, the women came forth from their little white houses, calling their children after them, leading some, carrying others, for they brought their babes also. See them as they come, small dusky boys with very scant clothing, little red-cheeked girls with bright garments thrown round them, all glad to go pattering through the yellow dust of the road, to see the kind Teacher who had made Himself their Friend. In twos and threes came the mothers, with bright kerchiefs on their heads, and coarse red or blue garments, for they were only village women, yet they dared not speak much to Jesus, for their husbands would not allow them to speak to a man on the road ; but they did what they were at liberty to do, and it was a beautiful thing. Bringing their children to Him as He sat in the shade, pushing forward the shy ones, with low soft voices, and modest eyes cast down, they made this gentle request—

“ Before Thou goest from among us, bless our little children, and put Thy hands on them and pray for them.” He did as the women asked Him, and blessed their children ; but more mothers came, with more children, yellow heads and dark, blue eyes and black, a little crowd of pure spirits that filled the heart of Jesus with joy, as they pressed round Him in the sunshine and the shadow.

But when His disciples saw the number of mothers and children who were coming, thinking that He was being foolishly troubled by these women, they began to stop the mothers and forbade the children to come any nearer. Jesus noticed the disciples turning away the women and keeping back the children, who stood aloof with hanging heads, and He was much displeased with them for stopping His little friends, and told the disciples to cease doing so in these words, which should be hung up in every nursery in England—

“ *Suffer the little children to come unto Me,*” He said, “ *and forbid them not, for of such is The Kingdom of Heaven.*” Joyful words to those mothers who with downcast hearts and averted eyes were turning to go away with their children unblest. The disciples, at the sound of His voice, ceased to interfere, and

with humbled looks stood by, a body of gruff men, corrected before these loving women. While the children, freeing themselves from their mothers' skirts, ran forward, a troop of glad faces, eager to be touched by Jesus. And there upon that open way He not only blessed them as He sat with the leaf-shadows flickering over His white tunic and calm sweet face—truly an elder Brother to these innocents—but He took the babes up in His arms, and on the heads of the little boys and girls He laid loving hands, and blessed them all. And as He blest them, He said to His disciples, who were standing a short way off with their skirts girt up and long sticks in their hands, ready for the journey—

“Whoever is not willing to receive Heaven as a little child shall not enter it.” This was the second time He had taught His disciples a lesson on purity and trust from little children, having said almost the same words to them in Peter's house less than a year before. And looking round upon His little friends, who had striven to sit upon His knee and put His hands upon their heads, and whose faces were shining with happiness, He said—

“Whoever shall receive one of these little children in My name, receiveth Me, and whoever receiveth Me, receiveth not Me only, but God who sent Me”—also words which He had used about children before, and while the little ones did not understand Him, the mothers' hearts were glad, for they knew that the goodness of Jesus was in their dear children.

This was one of the last things Jesus did in the Peræa, for, when He had blessed all the children who were brought to Him, little children who belonged to His beautiful Kingdom of Heaven in this world, He rose, and with His disciples left the village on His way to the Fords of Jordan. And the mothers led their children home, looking over their shoulders at the retreating figure of Jesus their King, and wishing they might go with Him.

No sweeter fruit could have been offered to Jesus of His teaching in the Peræa, than that the mothers should bring their children to Him, nor can any better fruit come of His mes-

sage to us, than that little children should early learn to come to Him, to love Him, and to ask His blessing on their heads. And thou, too, hast been brought by thy mother to Jesus, and though thou canst not see His face nor feel His hand, thou canst hear His voice that whispers of goodness in thy heart.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

FORDS OF JORDAN, SPRING, A.D. 34.

Having said farewell to the women and children at the village, Jesus and His disciples walked down from the hills towards the valley of the Jordan ; but, looking back, they saw a young man hastening after them, one of the Rulers of the church of the village through which they had just passed. He was a good man, and very rich, and had heard Jesus speaking, and He wished to ask Him one thing before He went away. Kneeling upon the road, He asked earnestly almost the same question as the Lawyer had put a few months before near Jericho—

“Good Master,” he said, “what good thing shall I do that I may have Heaven?” He was in a high position, and thought that he might do some great and good thing and so win Heaven ; for although he had tried to be good all his life, yet hearing Jesus speak had roused a strong wish to be better. Jesus looked at him as he knelt, waiting for a command, and said gently—

“Why dost thou ask Me about what is good? One alone is Good.” And the young man knew that He meant God. “But if thou wouldst have Heaven,” Jesus continued, “keep the commandments of God.” The young man expected to be told to do some grand and heroic thing, but he was told only what he had learnt when a boy at school.

“Which commandment?” he asked earnestly, thinking that Jesus might have something new to tell him about obeying them. Jesus liked his earnestness, and told him the principal commandments, thus—

"Thou shalt not kill ; thou shalt not steal, nor be unfaithful to thy wife, nor give false evidence ; honour thy father and thy mother, and love thy neighbour as thyself." Now these commandments were against doing wicked things which this young man would not be likely to have done, and he answered truthfully—

"I have kept all these commandments since I was a youth. What do I require to do still ?" That is, since he had begun to think for himself he had kept them, but he felt that he needed something more. And as Jesus looked at him, so eager to make better his already good life, He loved him, and wished him to become one of His friends, and looking kindly at him, He said—

"One thing thou needest, if thou wouldst be perfect. Go and sell everything thou hast, and give the money to poor people, and thou shalt be rich in Heavenly things, and come, follow Me." Now, he had got the answer which he so much wished, and the young Master had offered to take him with Him ! Thou hast heard of the sunshine of this young man's life. What was its shadow ? When he heard this answer his face changed, became perplexed and sorrowful ; and as he wavered, Jesus saw the spirit of evil overcoming the spirit of good within him. He longed to have Heaven, but he loved his wealth. He had to say "Yes" or "No" at once. Give up houses, horses, lands, money, and be laughed at by his friends, or tell Jesus that he loved something else better than His offer. Perhaps he satisfied himself with a middle course, hoping to keep his wealth and still try to be good, to be contented with less of goodness than Jesus offered. He did not speak, but rose and turned sorrowfully, for he could not give up his wealth, being so very rich.

When Jesus saw the young man turning thus sadly away from entering His Kingdom when the one fault of his life was pointed out to him, He was grieved, and speaking to His disciples who were near, He said—

"It is difficult for a rich man to enter The Kingdom of Heaven." And they were astonished to hear Him say this,

for they admired rich people. The men who were considered holiest in Jerusalem were rich, while poor men were pushed aside for being poor, and the disciples themselves hoped to be made rich in the Kingdom of Jesus, for following Him as they were doing.

"Children," said Jesus, seeing their surprise, and as though drawing them closer to Himself, "it is difficult for them that trust in their riches, to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." And then they understood Him better; that men must not trust to money to make them good and bring them into Heaven, for that is impossible, Jesus adding, in one of the proverbs of the country, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter The Kingdom of Heaven." But these words again perplexed the disciples, for they knew that rich people gave much money to their churches, and they all hoped to be rich, and Jesus had promised that they would enter His Kingdom of Heaven.

"Who then, can enter the Kingdom of Heaven?" asked one of them in a surprised tone, for he thought that if rich men could not easily get in, no others could do so. Jesus did not wish to speak further, and looking at them, He answered quietly—

"Things which seem impossible with men, are possible with God, for all things are possible with Him." But this answer did not satisfy them. They talked over it, and thought over it, and although Jesus had taught them that He had come to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to the poor, they were anxious at that moment to have a clear understanding about the riches which they expected to get from His Kingdom. Peter spoke for the rest, who pressed round to hear the end of this thing in which they were so deeply interested, and he began earnestly addressing his gentle Master—

"See us," he said to Jesus, "we have all left our homes and followed Thee, and what are we to have for it?" The first part of the answer of Jesus is one of those sayings reaching into the future which I cannot explain to thee, and which it is not necessary that thou shouldst understand; but it must

have filled the minds of these Galilean fishermen with splendid dreams.

"I say truly," said Jesus, "that you who have followed Me, when I sit in Heaven on the throne of My glory, you shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And," He added, "every man who hath left his brothers, sisters, mother, father, wife, children, house, or lands, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, shall receive much more in this world, with punishments, and Heaven in the world to come." Thus, whatever thou givest up—like the young Ruler's riches—for Jesus' sake, thou wilt have greater happiness than if thou hadst kept them; and have Heaven hereafter. And He added this old short warning to those who thought they could count up their good deeds, and fix their reward—

"But," He said, "many that are first shall be last, and last shall be first." Thus a pure childlike service, which counts on no reward, will be put before the worship of those who do no good thing without thinking how good it is of them to do it; so that many who have seemed great and good to themselves and other people, and who came first on earth, may find that some who were never noticed and least thought of in this world, will for their purity of service be first in Heaven. What a hope this is for children! Not riches, not cleverness, not knowledge, not power, but purity of mind and simplicity of heart, these are the treasures of Heaven.

Therefore, my child, let rich and poor be all alike to thee. Measure people by their goodness, not by their money; and if thou art ever tempted to seek after wealth and to forget God, remember that wealth is too often like gold in the pockets of the shipwrecked sailor, which cannot save, but may sink him.

THE WORKERS AND THE VINES.

JERICHO PLAIN, SPRING, A.D. 34.

The road from the foot of the Peræan Hills to the Fords at Jericho passed through sandy and uncultivated country, gradually down to the deep terraced valley of the Jordan, that was lined thickly with trees along the banks up to which the water rose at flood times. The trees were now in full green leaf, and when Jesus and His disciples waded through the water at the wide, shallow ford, and went up the steep road that led to Jericho, they were then in the most fruitful district in the land, where flowers first bloomed, and barley first ripened, and grapes and figs were soonest ready. Although the sun shone hotly now, the grass was fresh and green, and the leaves of the sycamore and fig and palm trees cast their shadows on the road, while the fragrant blossom of the flowering fruit trees — apple, apricot, almond, and balsam — scented the air. Wheat and barley were already waving in the fields like billows upon a yellow sea, while by the roadside the daisy fringed its white star, the red anemone spread its flowers in thousands through the grass, and in the tangled wood the damask rose and scarlet geranium grew wild; and while in the deep blue air the lark hid itself singing by the snowy cloud, twittering sparrows held their councils in the hedge, and thrush called to thrush where trees were thick.

On the slopes and terraces of the Jordan valley the disciples had seen the vines in thousands, with their broad green leaves and slender tendrils twining round poles, where the little grapes were forming. They also saw the broad well-hedged gardens where among the green vines, with bare and dusky arms, the labourers were at work thinning the fruit and cleaning off the insects. But the busiest time was in Summer, when the heavy bunches of rich black grapes were gathered into baskets and carried to the wine tubs to have the juice pressed out, and then the whole vineyard was busy as an English harvest field.

As they went through this rich country towards Jericho, Jesus told them a story about *The Workers and the Vines*, which is part of His answer to Peter's question when he asked what the disciples were to get for following Him. He said that The Kingdom of Heaven is like a rich man who had a fine house and large vineyard, and he required more workers, and went out early in the morning to the village market-place to get men to work, and they made a bargain with him, agreeing to work all day for one penny each, which was counted good payment in that country, and all the idle men who were there, went away to work for him, commencing about five in the morning, while the day was cool. But he found that he had not enough workers, and about nine o'clock, when the sun was growing hot, he went back to the market, and again hired all the idle men who were standing in the sunshine, saying—

“Go you also into my vineyard and work, and I will pay you whatever is right.” And they also went away and began to work, trusting that he would give them what they deserved. The first men, however, would not trust him so; they bargained for a penny each. But he had so much to do in his large vineyard, that twice, at twelve and at three o'clock in the afternoon, he went back again to the market-place, and each time he found more men, who went gladly to work for him, with no better bargain than the rest, trusting that he would treat them fairly. Again he went to the market, and by this time it was five o'clock in the afternoon, the heat of the day was over, and the working day was nearly past, for darkness came on about six, and finding still some idle men, he said—

“Why do you stand here all the day idle?”

“Because nobody hath hired us,” they replied.

“Go you also into my vineyard,” he said, and although he did not promise them anything at all, and they were not likely to get anything for working so short a time as one hour, they obeyed him willingly. In an hour's time the red sun was setting over the purple hills, and all work had to be stopped

among the vines, and the master told his servant to pay the workers as they went away, saying—

“Call the workers and pay them their hire of one penny each, beginning at these who came last, and ending with these who came first.” And the servant did as he was told. He called up first these who came at five o’clock in the afternoon, who had not been promised anything, and who hardly hoped to get money, and to their surprise each one got a penny put into his hand. The other workers who had been promised what was right were called next, and each one got a penny also, and they were much pleased. Last of all came the workers who had bargained before they would begin, to get a penny for working all day, and who now expected to get more, but each one got also a penny. But when they received it, they would not go away, and flung their pennies on the ground, and spoke against their master to his servant, saying that he was not a just man.

“These last men have only worked one hour,” they exclaimed, “and thou hast made them equal with us who have worked all through the heat of the day.” When this was told to the master, he came and spoke to them, but he was not angry; and calling them his friends, he showed them that they were quite wrong in what they said.

“Friend,” he said to one of them, “I have done nothing unfair to thee. Thou didst agree with me to work all day for a penny;—take it up and go away, for it is my will to give to these men who came last, the same as to thee. Is it wrong for me to do what I will with mine own money? Hath my kindness made thee jealous?” The sight of his generosity to the other workers, instead of exciting the admiration of these men had only made them envious and angry. But how could it be fair to pay all these workers alike? They were paid, not for the work they did, but for the way in which they did it. They who bargained for a penny, got it, while they who trusted their master and gave him willing service, because of the way in which they worked, got far more than they expected. God measures all work done for Him by the love with which it is done.

Having told His disciples this story, Jesus explained that it was intended to show what He meant by the words "The last should be first, and the first last."

And thou, my child, wilt rejoice that Jesus puts such value upon small services, if they are given in love and trust ; for all that children can do with hand or voice is little compared with what great and clever men can do ; but in sweet singleness of heart the loving service of a child is a pattern to the greatest of men.

THE SONS OF ZEBEDEE.

PLAIN OF JERICHO, SPRING, A.D. 34.

Jericho was six miles from the Fords of Jordan, and as Jesus climbed up the steep road from the river, behind them lay a stream winding down to the Dead Sea, with the green hills of the Peræa and the purple mountains of Moab in the background ; before them were the bare limestone hills of Judæa, and all around spread the well-watered plain of Jericho, stretching for twelve miles, so thick with fruit trees and rich crops, that it was called the Paradise of Judæa. When crossing the river, they were accompanied by numbers of joyous people on camels, asses, and horses, going to keep the Passover at Jerusalem, for it was the caravan road from Arabia, and most of the people from Galilee and the Peræa, came over this Ford to go to the Festival. The road was now full of pilgrims in little family groups, pedlars with their packs of wares, fruit-sellers with their baskets, priests riding on asses, and country people walking, all toiling onwards towards the gates of Jericho, whose houses of red brick and palaces of white marble rose from among the feathery palm trees and beautiful gardens, which gave it the name of the perfumed city.

The disciples knew of the danger into which Jesus was going, for the council of priests at Jerusalem, in view of the approaching Passover, had given notice that if any person knew where Jesus was, he was to tell them that He

might be taken a prisoner wherever He could be found. Perhaps the priests hoped to frighten Jesus away, but the disciples were astonished to see that instead of walking as usual along with them, He went on before, as though anxious to meet danger, and they followed, although they would willingly have turned back. They did not know, they could not tell, that He had now reached the last fortnight of His life. Never again would He walk through those warm country lanes which He loved, where the tangled wild flowers grew, and gum trees flung their shadows on the yellow pathway. And as He walked, He told them that this would be His last journey. He knew that His enemies the priests would again try to take Him a prisoner, and this time He would not avoid capture, but would rather invite it by going openly into the city, and speaking against the chief men in their own Temple with even greater force than before; and He knew that when they took Him a prisoner they would have Him put to death, which meant that He would first be scourged and made sport of by the soldiers. And so, taking His disciples aside by themselves, He again told them plainly and earnestly what would happen to Him, so that they might not be afraid when it came. He had told them before at Mount Hermon, on the road from Cesaræa to Capernaum, and in the Peræa, what would be the end of His work, and they would not believe Him, but had begun to quarrel over who should be greatest when He was King over Jerusalem and the world.

“We are going up to Jerusalem,” He told them now again, “where everything will happen that hath been written about Me in the Bible. I shall be given up to the chief priests and the Lawyers, who will say that I should be put to death, and will give Me over to the Roman soldiers, who will mock and scourge and spit upon Me, and nail Me upon a wooden cross to die, and on the third day I shall rise again.” But the disciples did not understand Him. They firmly believed that the coming of His great Kingdom was very near now, and as what He told them now did not suit the splendid plans which

they had made for themselves and for Him, they again refused to believe Him. A kingdom such as they expected, without a king, was to their minds ridiculous. They felt sure that He was mistaken in what He said; and that the people at the Passover would gather round Him and make Him their King, and that the priests would not be able to take Him a prisoner. They could not understand that His Kingdom was in their hearts only, and that it would never put money into their pockets nor crowns upon their heads.

Two of the disciples, James and John, felt certain that crowns and thrones were near. They were the sons of Zebedee the fisherman at the Lake of Gennesaret, cousins of Jesus, and were rather better off than the other disciples. Why should they not be His chief Princes? They told their mother Salome, who along with other women had come from Galilee, that the kingdom of heaven was near. Salome knew what her sons had done for Jesus during the three years that they had been with Him, and she thought that now had come the time when a private word would secure for them the highest places in His great kingdom. She told her sons of her plan, and despite all that Jesus had said against seeking to be the greatest among the disciples, these two men agreed to her proposal. An opportunity soon arrived when Jesus was alone by Himself, and, bidding her sons follow her, Salome came, and kneeling, worshipped Him.

"Master," she said, "we wish Thee to do for us whatever we shall ask."

"What do you wish Me to do for you?" Jesus replied. And thinking only of her sons, Salome answered—

"Command that these my two sons shall sit the one on Thy right hand and the other on Thy left in Thy Kingdom." She did not think this unreasonable. Some person would be highest, she thought; and, like a true mother, she asked nothing for herself, although she believed Jesus would soon sit upon King Herod's royal throne of ivory and gold. Jesus was not angry. He knew that her mother's heart meant well, although it grieved Him to see

how these disciples had misunderstood all His teaching about His Kingdom of Heaven among men.

"You do not know what you ask," He replied gently. And turning to James and John, He added, "Are you able to bear what I am about to bear?"

"We are able," they replied, although they did not know what He meant, and Jesus pitied their foolish bravery. He knew they would be true to Him; but He sent them away with an answer the reverse of what they hoped for.

"You shall indeed share My sufferings," He said, "but to sit on My right hand and on My left, is not Mine to give you; but it shall be given to them for whom it hath been prepared by God." And indeed these two young men did suffer for Jesus, for James was killed in Jerusalem, and John was banished to the lonely island of Patmos, in the Mediterranean.

Some of the disciples heard about what had been asked, and when they told the others, they all spoke very angrily to James and John, for they thought they had made a shameful attempt to get the chief places in the Great Kingdom of Jesus, which they felt more certain than ever would be set up in a few days. Jesus had only that day told them that He was walking towards death; and yet they were again quarrelling over the old dispute as to who should be the greatest in His Kingdom, and on this last sad journey He had once more to interfere and stop their quarrel. How bitter for Him, and how shameful of them, after all He had said to them! and calling all the disciples towards Him, He spoke to them about the Romans, but only to point out that they should do differently from them.

"You know," Jesus said, "that the princes of foreigners, rule harshly over them, and that their great men oppress the common people. But it shall not be so among you; for whoever would be great among you should be as a servant, and whoever would be first among you should be the slave of all," He meant that humility made a man truly great, and that the poorest servant might be better than the richest master. He reminded them also of His own beautiful life among them,

saying that He had come to serve others and not to be served, and that He would die for all men ; and then, without even once naming James and John or Salome, He turned, and walked on towards Jericho, which was now not far off. And the disciples followed Him in silence and in wonder.

And thou, my child, wilt learn from this not to be proud, wishing to rule with power over others, but rather to be quiet and gentle, willing to serve, and leading them by thy example ; remembering that Jesus called Himself not king, prince, lord, or even ruler, but, servant.

ZACCHÆUS IN THE TREE.

JERICHO, THURSDAY, MARCH, A.D. 34.

Weary with their journey in the burning sun, at length Jesus and His disciples reached the grey stone walls of Jericho, with its towers and battlements from which the watchmen watched the houses and gardens of the rich Priests, Levites, and Tax-gatherers, who lived there within easy reach of Jerusalem. A thicket of brown tangled thorns grew round the foot of the walls, and at other parts, green creepers climbed almost to the top or hung over from the inside, and the heads of the green feathery palms that grew in the streets of the town, could be seen spreading above the roofs of the highest houses, for it was a city of palm trees. When they came to the low stone archway of the city gate, what with people who had come out to meet them and those who had journeyed up with them, there was quite a crowd, filling all the narrow paved road. The news had gone on before, that the young Prophet of Galilee was coming to the town on His way to Jerusalem, and the people of Jericho were curious to see Him, and pressed close round about Him. Men have often wondered what Jesus was like. He was tall, strong, and beautiful, for even when He was not speaking, men and women came crowding just to look at Him as He walked along the road.

Jericho was an old and rich town. Not only was it in the

midst of the richest land in the country, but it was on the main road from distant places to the great city of Jerusalem, and many merchants with their goods passed through it, and all had to pay a toll to the Romans before they were allowed to pass. The toll-keepers or tax-gatherers, as thou knowest, were called "Publicans," and in Jericho there were a large number of them, many of whom were rich, for they used to cheat and oppress the people, and were heartily hated and despised in return, for collecting the taxes of the Roman conquerors.

The chief and richest of the Jericho tax-gatherers was a little man called Zacchæus, who was like Matthew of Capernaum, a Jew, and was much hated in consequence. Like many little people he was exceedingly curious to see sights, and when he knew that Jesus was coming,—Jesus of whom he had heard so much, and whom the proud Pharisees called "the friend of tax-gatherers,"—he had a strong wish to see Him, and went to the principal street up which Jesus was to come. But when the crowd came, packing the street with people taller than himself, Zacchæus was pushed aside, none the less roughly that he was the chief tax-gatherer; and although he heard that Jesus was passing, by his utmost efforts, rising on tiptoe, he could not see Him, but he heard the people say whither He was going. When free to move, Zacchæus started off and ran like a school boy by side ways, so as to get ahead of the crowd and be in a good place to see Jesus when He should pass again. Now there were trees growing in the streets and gardens of this old town, and among them was the green fig tree called the sycamore, with a short rough stem, and long branches spreading low down over the roadway, thick with broad green leaves; and looking about him for a good place to see from, Zacchæus, with comical boyishness for a man of his importance, climbed nimbly up a sycamore tree, and seated himself upon a large branch, whence, partly hidden by the leaves, he had an open view.

Soon the crowd came filling the street and pressing round Jesus, who walked among His disciples, easily recognised by

His white tunic, brown hair, and beautiful face. Zacchæus gazed at Him as He approached, and felt that all he had heard of His wonderful appearance fell far short of what he now saw, and he was filled with admiration for this plainly dressed young Galilean. Holding the twigs aside with eager hand, the dusky countenance and twinkling eyes of Zacchæus looked sharply down through the green leaves to get a near and full view of Jesus' face as He passed under ; but, to his amazement, Jesus stopped and looked up.

"Zacchæus," He said, "come down quickly, for to-day I shall stay at thy house." Jesus knew who he was, and Zacchæus rejoiced that He should speak thus to him. Since Jesus had asked him for hospitality, he would be His friend, and open his fine house to receive Him ; and quickly he climbed from his branch and slid down the tree, and passing through the people, greeted Jesus in the street, and after the manner of the time, conducted Him by the shortest way to the gate of the gardens which surrounded his house. And as they went, Jesus talked with the little tax-gatherer ; but there were Pharisees in the crowd, who when they saw whither He was going, said with a sneer, just as they said about Matthew's supper—

"He has gone to live with a bad man." And they would not enter even the courtyard of Zacchæus's house. But Zacchæus ordered a dinner to be made ready for Jesus and His friends, and saw their hot feet bathed with the coolest of water, for Jesus had won his heart. He also asked many of his own friends to come in and dine with Him.

The dinner passed pleasantly, and when it was over and while the guests rested on rich couches taking fruit and wine, Jesus talked much to them, and Zacchæus, listening, felt that his own life was not what he now wished it had been. He thought of his successful business as a tax-gatherer, in which he had often been tempted to take more money from people than he ought to have taken : and he feared that he had been harsh and unjust. But he wished that no man should suffer from anything he had done ; and, standing up, he openly declared his firm

belief in what Jesus taught, that the news of it might be carried through the city and country as a notice to all who did business with him.

"See, Lord!" he said, addressing Jesus, "one-half of all that I have, I now give to the poor; and if I have taken anything wrongly from any man, I shall give him back four times as much." How generous and how humble has this little business man become! One-half of all the money he has he gives to those who have no claim upon him, excepting that they are poor. He cannot recollect any man whom he has cheated, but if there should be one, let him come forward, and he will pay him back four times over. Had Zacchæus been dishonest in his past life he would not have dared thus to pretend before Jesus with an "if," that he had cheated no one; and Jesus was pleased with him, and speaking before them all, He said—

"To-day hath salvation come to this house, since Zacchæus also hath become a son of Abraham. I came to seek and to save the wicked." And Zacchæus did not give up his business, but went back to his tax-table with a fresh determination to deal justly with all men.

And thou wilt remember not to judge any one harshly because of the trade he may be in, for in this little tax-gatherer Jesus saw a good heart and a struggling soul, a man worthy of His friendship; and do thou learn these lines of Robert Burns—

"Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord, its various tone,
Each spring, its various bias:
Then, at the balance, let's be mute,
We never can adjust it,—
What's *done*, we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted."

THE KING'S SERVANTS.

JERICHO, THURSDAY, MARCH, A.D. 34.

After dinner, Jesus talked a great deal with those who were at Zacchæus's house, where He was to spend the night, for He was now within an easy day's walk of Jerusalem. To-morrow He would sleep at Bethany, and two days thereafter He would ride into the city and into the midst of His enemies. Looking round upon His friends at the table, He saw from their faces that they confidently expected Him to be declared King at the coming Passover Festival, King of that Kingdom of cities, thrones, armies, and power, which they believed would come with the Christ, and that they would all share in His success; for they would not believe that He would die, and leave them neither poorer nor richer, to carry on His teaching and spread His true Kingdom of Heaven among men. And Jesus told them another story, in which He compared His coming death to a king who went away for a time, leaving his servants behind to work. The story was very like what had really happened with Archelaus, king of Judæa, who went to Rome to beg for his kingdom from the Emperor Cæsar and whose subjects sent men to oppose him; and all in the room knew about King Archelaus.

"A nobleman," said Jesus, "was going into a far-off country to ask the kingdom for himself, and to return, and he called ten of his servants, and lent them a golden pound each, saying—

" 'Trade with this money till I come back.' But the people of the country hated the nobleman, and sent messengers after him into the far-off land to say—'We will not have this man to be king over us.' But he got the kingdom, and when he came back to his own country, he ordered the servants to whom he had lent the money, to come before him, that he might know what they had made by trading with it. And the first servant who came said—

" 'Lord, with thy pound, I have made ten pounds more.'

“ ‘Well done, thou good servant !’ replied the king, ‘ because thou hast been so faithful with a very little, thou shalt rule over ten cities in my kingdom.’

“ ‘With thy pound, Lord, I have made five pounds,’ said the second servant.

“ ‘Be thou also a ruler over five of my cities,’ said the king to him. But when the third servant came he said—

“ ‘See, lord ! here is thy pound, which I have kept rolled up in a cloth,’ unrolling it as he spoke, ‘ for I was afraid of thee, because thou art an hard man ; thou takest up that which thou didst not put down, and reapest that which thou didst not sow.’ And the king was angry with this impudent servant.

“ ‘I will judge thee by thy own words, thou wicked servant !’ he exclaimed. ‘ Thou hast said thou knewest that I am an hard man, taking up what I did not put down, and reaping what I did not sow ; why, then, didst thou not put my money into the bank, that on my return I might have received it back with interest?’ The servant could not answer him, and turning to those who stood by, the king said, ‘Take the pound away from him, and give it to the servant that hath ten pounds.’ And they who stood by exclaimed—

“ ‘Lord, he hath already got ten pounds !’ But the king replied—

“ ‘I say, that to every one that hath made much, shall more be given, but from him that hath not made anything, even the pound which he hath shall be taken away from him. And bring out mine enemies, the men who would not have me to be king over them ; bring them hither, and slay them before me.’ ”

And thus Jesus ended the story, and those who were listening remembered, as they thought over it, how King Archelaus, about thirty years before, had slain and punished all the people who had opposed his being king of Jerusalem. But the true meaning of the story is this. All that Jesus had taught His twelve disciples in the last three years was like money lent to them, and they were to use what they had learned, in teaching and

spreading His Kingdom among men after He was dead, and some day they would be asked what good they had done with all that they had learned from Him. But the disciples did not understand the story in that way. They had begun by refusing to believe that Jesus would ever die, and starting with this error, they read everything wrongly. They could think of nothing but a great earthly kingdom—honours, armies, thrones, cities, riches, war, conquests, and this crowded common sense from their minds.

Jesus spent the night in Zacchæus's house ; and early in the morning the whole town was astir with people who had come in to sleep within its sheltering walls, preparing to start as soon as it was light on the long hot walk of about fifteen miles up to Jerusalem. They were saddling their camels and asses, and forming into bands to march up the steep and dangerous ravine among the rocky hills, for this was the favourite time of year for robbers to rush out on people who were travelling alone. The beggars too were busy, and were out earliest of all, to sit at the gates of the city and beg from all who went out and in, and by the roadside also, with loud cries, they begged the passing strangers to remember them.

But what has been lent thee, my child ? Let us count up. A loving heart, a quick mind, a clever tongue, a strong body, willing feet, a glad face and bright eyes. Surely these are as good as pounds of gold ! What wilt thou do with them ? With thy kind heart thou wilt love Jesus, with thy quick mind thou wilt think about God, with thy clever tongue, speak of Him, with thy strong body serve Him, running His messages with willing feet, and day by day thou wilt find this service more and more joyful.

God intrusts to all,
Talents few or many,
None so young and small
That they have not any.

BLIND BARTIMÆUS, THE BEGGAR.

JERICHO, FRIDAY, MARCH, A.D. 34.

The news of what Zacchæus had said at the dinner in his house the night before, that he believed in Jesus and His teaching, spread among the people, and when the time came for Jesus and His disciples to leave Jericho, there were a great many people wishing to go up to Jerusalem in His company. And when in the bright sunlight of early morning, He left Zacchæus's house and walked through the tree-shaded streets, the people looked at Him from the doors and windows of their houses, in even greater numbers than they had done yesterday, and when He reached the stone archway of the city gate, there was a large crowd following Him. Now there were two blind beggars sitting by the roadside near the gate, blind Bartimæus and his companion, for blind beggars often went in pairs, holding by each other as they walked along. With their quick ears they heard from the sound of feet and voices that there was an unusual crowd coming out of the town this morning, and knowing that it was the time for the people to go up to the Festival at Jerusalem, they shouted loudly for gifts. But Bartimæus became convinced from what he heard that there was something more than a crowd, and he shouted questions to those who were passing, asking what it all meant.

"Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," some one answered from the crowd. "Jesus of Nazareth!" thought Bartimæus. "Was it not He who healed the blind man at Jerusalem on the Sabbath and so enraged the priests, and is He not called the Friend of the poor and the blind?" Now seemed to be a chance to recover his sight—now or never! and he began to cry constantly, and stirred up his companion to cry also, as loudly as they could—

"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" was what they cried. "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" Now Jesus had not yet come to the place where

the two beggars sat in the sunshine, with their rags and staffs, and their white eyes looking upward, but seeing nothing; and the people who came before Him rebuked them for making so much noise, and told them to be quiet. But Bartimæus thought it was all very well for them to say that, but they had never been blind; and he shouted louder than ever—

“Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us!”

When Jesus came near, He heard the cries of Bartimæus and his friend, shouting now turn about and now both together; and He stopped.

“Bring him to Me,” He said. And they went over to the blind men, who were shouting still.

“Be glad! rise; Jesus calleth thee!” they said to them. Then Bartimæus, casting away his beggar’s-cloak for joy, sprang to his feet, and pushed his way through the crowd followed by his friend, until they both stood in the middle of the roadway before the young Countryman, trembling with earnest expectation although they could not see Him.

“What dost thou wish that I should do to thee?” a gentle voice asked, while the crowd seemed hushed around them.

“Lord, that our eyes may be opened, that we may see,” exclaimed Bartimæus earnestly, speaking for them both. Their eager faces told how sure they were that Jesus would do it, and He pitied the poor men.

“Receive thy sight,” Jesus said; “thy faith hath healed thee.” And as He spoke, they felt His hand touching first the eyes of one man and then the other. They had never felt so gentle a touch, and at once they could see; and the first thing they saw was a beautiful face, whose dark eyes seemed to look into their very souls. Jesus moved on, and the crowd went with Him; but the beggars would not be left behind, and followed in the crowd, praising God for what Jesus had done for them. And the people praised God also, for they believed that God was with Jesus.

This is the last special act of healing which we are told that Jesus did, for the threads of His life are now drawing to a close. His teaching in Galilee, in Judæa, in Samaria, in the Peræa is over, and His special acts of wonder-working, which began in the village of Cana, end now at the gates of Jericho in healing two blind beggars; for, great as His power was, it was never used to punish people or in acts of display, but only in kind and lowly deeds, of which it was His strong wish that no one should speak.

Jerusalem was again in a stir with preparations for another great Passover Festival. Although it would not begin for a week yet, many people had arrived in the town who required to come early to prepare themselves, and the streets were busy with shopkeepers bringing their wares to sell to the crowds who would be there; and every day fresh bands of people, from distant towns and villages, came marching over Olivet, singing joyful psalms and waving green branches when the splendid city came in sight. And the Temple began to be filled with people waiting to see the priests, and get leave from them to attend the Festival; and many persons who came from Galilee expected to find Jesus there, for He had not been in Galilee for months. But they were told that He had had to fly across the Jordan to the Peræa, and that the council of priests had issued a notice to the people, some weeks before, that if any person knew where Jesus was, they were to tell them, and they would have Him taken a prisoner at once; which was like offering a price to His friends to betray Him, for it was a great matter to be in favour with the priests, who thus hoped to keep Him away from this Festival. In view of this, the common talk among the gossips who stood talking in the Temple was—

“What do you think? Will He come to this Festival?” They wished to hear Him again, and some said “Yes,” and some said “No;” but no one could tell.

But while they talked, Jesus was on His way up from Jericho, walking in front of His friends up the hot and stifling

road among the hills, a climb which is usually done riding ; but He had no horse, and had to be in Bethany before it was dark. After about six hours' hard climbing, He reached the green Mount of Olives with His friends, and before three o'clock of that afternoon they were in the little tree-shaded village of Bethany again, for He had come to stay in the cottage of His friend Lazarus—the last house in which He would live. The disciples also found lodgings in the village, but most of His friends from Galilee went further on, some into the city of Jerusalem, some to put up their white tents and build their mat huts on the hillside near the walls ; and they carried the news into the city, and told it to the crowds in the Temple, that He had come, and was living at Bethany with Lazarus.

Jesus had now entered upon the last week of His life. The following day (Saturday) was the Jewish Sabbath, which He spent quietly in Bethany, but His friends in Jerusalem came out in numbers to see Him and also to see Lazarus, for it was a favourite walk of the people of the city through the groves and flower gardens of Olivet and on to Bethany, by the three paths which led over the hill. When the priests heard of His return, they met and consulted together. They thought their public warning would have kept Him away. But He and Lazarus were together again, and the people were already going out in numbers to see them. What were they to do ? for it had become a common thing for people who went out to Bethany and saw Lazarus, to come back believers in Jesus.

“Put them both to death,” said a priest. And without more ado this small meeting resolved that it would be best for everybody to have Lazarus again in his grave ; and they went away satisfied with their wisdom.

Having made up their minds to kill Jesus, how easy it seemed to them to resolve to kill Lazarus also, or to kill even more, if necessary, to get Jesus out of their way ! It is a terrible thing when violence and cruelty take possession of the mind, for they know no limit.

And thou, my child, wilt beware of the first blow. It is the first blow which shatters the fair mirror of peace ; the second breaks only a fragment ; and the third, fourth, fifth, will follow without thought or feeling. Stay thy hand at the first thought of hurting another, for then thou canst easily do it.

HE RIDES INTO JERUSALEM.

JERUSALEM, SABBATH, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Early in the morning the people were out in Bethany, for Jesus had said that He would that day go up again to the Golden Temple with His disciples. At other Festival times He had gone quietly, but this time He would allow any one who wished, to come with Him ; nor did He start early in the morning as usual, but waited until the cool of the afternoon. And during all that day His friends spread the news among the Galileans who were in Jerusalem and camped on the green slopes of Olivet, that Jesus was coming to the Temple in the afternoon, notwithstanding that the council had said they would take Him a prisoner.

With a blue April sky overhead and sunshine flickering on the leaves of the date palms, Jesus, with His disciples and a number of friends, left Bethany walking, and as they went up the hillside from the village to the main road over Olivet they were joined by more friends ; but when they came near to the village of Bethphage, Jesus decided that He would ride into Jerusalem, and said to two of His disciples—

“Go to the village over yonder, and as you enter it you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her, on which no man has yet sat ; loose them and bring them to me. And if any one shall ask you why you do so, say that the Lord requireth the colt, and the man will send him at once.” And He waited there until the two disciples should return, and while He waited, people who were going in numbers by this road to the Festival, gathered round Him ; and His friends went and cut down branches of the broad feathery palm, to wave in the air.

And soon the disciples returned leading the colt, for when they went to Bethphage they found everything as Jesus had said. The man was friendly to Jesus, and when he heard that He was going into Jerusalem, he gladly lent his young ass for Him to ride on.

Having no saddle, a disciple cast his rough blue cloak over the colt's back to do for one. Thou mayest wonder that Jesus should ride upon an ass, but a white ass was the favourite animal for prophets and even kings to ride on in that country; horses were used by fighting-men; and Jesus was the Prince of Peace. And when He mounted the young ass, His friends shouted and rejoiced, believing that His triumph was near, and when He rode on, some ran before Him and spread their great outer cloaks—blue, yellow, brown—upon the dusty road, that He might ride over them, while others laid their broad green branches on the way, a common thing for people to do before a king; and the villagers of Bethphage came out to look at Jesus as He rode away. The beginning of the ride was a gentle rise, the path winding Southwards to the shoulder of the Mount of Olives, and the fields on each side were green with spring grass and bright with wild flowers, while the trees grew in thick clusters not far from the road. As they went up, the crowd grew larger, each person getting a green palm branch to wave, a thing which the people were accustomed to do when joyfully marching over that hill to Festivals in Jerusalem, and the hot and dusty road was at times green as a pathway through the woods, when with shouts of rejoicing, the people pressed forward and threw down their green branches in front of the ass. Every time the people shouted loudly the delighted disciples again spread their cloaks upon the ground, that Jesus might ride over them, and children climbed the trees in the fields and brought more branches, and ran out and in among the people rejoicing with the rest.

The friends of Jesus in Jerusalem and among the Galileans in their tents outside the city walls, had determined to go out to meet Him with shouts and waving branches, as bands of

people from the country were often met on Olivet as they came to Festivals; and cutting down broad palm branches, they went up the path on the Jerusalem side of the Mount to meet Him near the top. When Jesus and His friends reached the shoulder of the hill, they saw the people from Jerusalem coming up the other side, who welcomed Him with shouts and waving branches, which were answered by his rejoicing friends. He had now come to the top of the hill, and was about to go down through olive groves and rose gardens, down the winding stony path to the bridge across the brook Kedron. Full before Him was the splendid city, with its watch-towers on the walls, its gardens and palaces on Mount Zion, its Temple on Mount Moriah, with its walls, pillars, and cloisters of white marble, its roof of bright gold as if on fire, and with sunshine upon its pinnacles, spires, and gates of gold and burnished brass; over all, spread the blue cloudless sky, and beyond, were the bare purple and red hills of Judæa, fading in a haze of distance. It was a sight which no Jew could see without emotion, a sight which made the Festival bands shout and sing for joy when they beheld it, and when the disciple saw it at this time, with loud voices they began to rejoice and praise God for all Jesus had done, singing loudly—

“Hosanna to the Son of King David! Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord! Peace in Heaven, and glory in the highest!” part of which was from the 118th Psalm, which was a favourite song of the people at Festival times, until the whole crowd sang, and those who came up from Jerusalem also took up the song and sang it as the two crowds met with waving palms and great rejoicing. But amid it all Jesus sat silent, going slowly forward at the pace of the crowd. At any other time He would have told them to be quiet, but not now. He let them sing on. Mingling with those who had come out from Jerusalem to meet Him were the usual watchful Pharisees, friends of the priests, and they were angry when they saw the joy of the people, and heard them calling Jesus a King, and forcing their way near

enough Him to be heard above the singing, with threatening gestures they screamed, pointing at the disciples—

“Teacher, stop Thy disciples ! Teacher, stop Thy disciples !” continuing to shout, until turning calmly to them, He said—

“I tell you if these men were to cease, the very stones would cry out,” a common proverb of the country, meaning that it was a time when joy should not be restrained. And on hearing this the disciples shouted louder than ever. And when they passed the tents and huts of the people from Galilee who were camped on the sunny Western side, they also waved branches and shouted, for they were glad to see Jesus going again to the Temple, and many of them came and joined the crowd on the road. But as He rode on, looking over at the great city spread out on the other side of the narrow valley, He was thinking, not of the shouts around Him, but of the future of the city which might have been so truly great ; for He seemed to see it surrounded with soldiers, who were battering down its walls, and pouring in through the openings sword in hand with waving flags and shining armour, to slay men, women, and children in thousands, while the Temple itself seemed to burst into flames ; and His eyes filled with tears, and stopping, He exclaimed with deep emotion—

“O Jerusalem ! hadst thou but known this day the things which belong to peace ! For the day will come when thine enemies will throw up banks about thee, and surround thee with soldiers, and press thee in on every side and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children with thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone standing upon another, because thou knewest not the time when thou wert visited.” Within fifty years Jerusalem was taken and the Temple burned by Titus, the Roman general ;—but the people who were with Jesus thought He need not weep when they were all rejoicing. And He rode on again, down the steep path into the Kedron Valley, passing through the city gardens, and near to the Garden of Gethsemane which He loved, while the people

kept scattering olive, fig, walnut, and palm branches on the road, as they continued to sing—

“Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom which cometh of our father, King David. Hosanna in the highest!” And sweetest of all in that psalm were the voices of little children running and shouting what they heard the others saying. And now numbers of the people ran on before Jesus, across the narrow bridge over the Kedron, and into the city by the St Stephen’s gate, and up the narrow street that led to the Temple, shouting as they went, that a Prophet was coming. The city was very full of people who had come for the Festival, and soon the roofs and windows of the houses were covered with on-lookers, for the whole city was roused, and this was its busiest part. And when at length Jesus came riding upon an ass up the Temple street, they saw a tall, beautiful young Man, with dark eyes, and a sad face, dressed in the white tunic and coarse blue cloak of a Countryman of Galilee, who sat calm, amid all the stir and noise and danger around Him; and those who had not seen Him before were struck with wonder, exclaiming—

“Who is this?” and Galilean voices in the crowd answered as they pressed up the narrow way—

“This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth, of Galilee.” And the Pharisees, when they saw the crowds that had come to welcome Him, turned upon each other in dismay and vexation, exclaiming, as they upbraided one another—

“See how you have no power! All the world hath gone after Him.” This was what had come of their threats and proclamations against Jesus—only greater popularity.

Onward still the people pressed, up the winding, steep, and narrow streets, until they reached the white steps of the Temple, and while some went inside to see what would happen there, others waited to watch Jesus dismount. Leaving the little ass, He went up the great steps with His disciples, and taking off His sandals, passed through the Temple gate and into the first porch and through among the

tall marble pillars, standing once more within the place whence He had had to fly only a few months before, amid threats of "Stone Him!" but now His friends shouted "Hosanna!" "Hosanna!" until the Temple arches rang again. From the outer porch He went first into the open court, with sunshine on its coloured pavement, and thence through the upper courts, looking round Him, and saw that the buyers and sellers with their animals and goods, were trespassing again. Still He said nothing; but having gone into every part, He returned to His friends, and with His disciples, walked out of the Temple and out of the city back again over the hill to Bethany as the sun was setting, for it was toward evening. And though the priests had resolved to take Him a prisoner, they were so surprised with the love of the common people for Him, and the number of His friends, that they feared to touch Him that day lest there should be a fight with the quick-tempered Galileans who had come to the Festival.

Remember as the greatest thing in this day, that Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon an ass, dressed in a plain white tunic, as the Messenger of Peace; for thou wilt read of many processions of kings, with soldiers, banners, drums, cannon, and cheering, but this ride of Jesus, amid gentle songs and waving branches, is more glorious than them all; for while they ride as kings of armies and of power, He rode as a Prince, who would not fight, and whose command is love.

CHILDREN SHOUTING IN THE TEMPLE.

JERUSALEM, MONDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Every morning after this, the rising sun found Jesus and His disciples walking over the Mount of Olives to teach in the Temple, and every evening they returned at sundown by the same hill path, to sleep in Bethany. On Monday morning, as they walked towards Jerusalem, Jesus was hungry, and they had nothing to eat, and looking about them for trees with fruit, they saw by the roadside at some distance, a fig tree

with branches thickly covered with broad green leaves ; and although it was not yet time for that year's figs, it was just the kind of tree on which to find some of last year's fruit still hanging under the leaves. The disciples knew well the tree on which to look for such figs, but when they came to it and had shaken some of the branches, although there were plenty of strong leaves, they did not find any fruit. And Jesus said—

“ Let no fruit grow on thee for ever.” The tree withered, though not at once, and the disciples asked each other—

“ How did the fig tree wither away ? ” And Peter spoke to Jesus about it, and His reply was a rebuke to them all, for they had begun to doubt.

“ Trust in God,” He said, adding the words that He had used in the Peræa, when they asked for more faith. “ If you have faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do what hath been done to the fig tree, but if you tell this mountain on which we stand, to be taken up and cast into the sea, and do not doubt in your hearts, but believe, it shall be done.” I have told thee before that when Jesus spoke of moving mountains, He was only using a common expression of the time, meaning to do great things ; but He certainly did mean that these men would receive power of a kind greater than we can ever receive. And Jesus added, to strengthen their trust still more—

“ I say that whatever things you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive. And when you pray, remember to forgive any one who may have injured you, that God may also forgive you your faults. *For if you do not forgive others, God will not forgive you.*” Thus repeating to them a little bit of the beautiful prayer which He taught them near the Fords of Jordan a few months before. But thou must not think that all that Jesus said to His disciples is meant for thee, especially His promises of wonderful power to them ; for they had a work to do which thou wilt never have, and they were promised and did receive power which thou must not expect to get. Thou wilt hear it said that Jesus destroyed the fig tree

as a punishment ; but it is not right to say so of one so gentle as He.

Four years ago, at this very Passover Festival, Jesus had cleared all the sellers of cattle and sheep, and other dealers and money-changers out of the Golden Temple ; and when there yesterday, He noticed that they were all back again. For some time they had kept away, but gradually, as the time passed, first one and then another dealer had got in, until at this Festival there were as many there as ever. And when Jesus and His disciples reached the Temple on this Monday morning, He found them there, filling the beautiful outer Court of the Gentiles with disorder and noise—lowing cattle, pens of bleating lambs, men calling upon the strangers to come and buy—more like a market than a Temple, while in shelter of the porches the money-changers had set up their tables, and sat close by the Teachers of the law, to change foreign coins, and cheat the strangers if they could. And people who had not come to worship, but wished to go from one part of the city to the other, crossed the great court as a short way, coming in by one Temple gate, and going out by another.

And that morning, so near the end of His teaching, Jesus did as He had done at the beginning of it ; He turned both the sellers and the buyers out of the Temple to make their bargains in the street ; and upset the tables of the money-changers upon the smooth marble pavement of the porches, and overturned the seats of them that sat selling doves, and told them to go out. And soon it became known that Jesus had come back, and was clearing the Temple again, and then He had no need to touch any one, for they hurried out, all the faster that this was the second time He had found them making a market of the outer court. Thus He cleared the Temple a second time, and looked round upon broad pavements, uncrowded steps, and quiet porches and cloisters, with only the peaceful worshippers left, who walked to and fro in the sunshine in the great wide courts with noiseless naked feet on the beautiful coloured marble.

And Jesus said that nobody should be allowed to carry a dish through the Temple ; which stopped all those who had made a short way across the large court. He then began to teach in one of the porches, and the first thing He said was to upbraid the Temple council for letting the place be so degraded.

“ Is it not written by Isaiah in the Bible ? ” He said—

“ ‘ Mine House shall be called a House of prayer for all people ? ’ ”

“ But you have made it a den of thieves. ”

Now the Temple was under the care of hundreds of priests and Levites, with many servants and guards to help them, and these were ruled over by fourteen head priests, who formed the Temple council. Many of them had seen the two clearings of the Temple by Jesus, and some of the chief priests and chief Lawyers, when they heard what he said to the people, were very angry, and wished to have Him taken a prisoner at once ; but, like the lesser rogues whom Jesus had turned out, they found that they were afraid of this calm, young Countryman, and listening to Him as He spoke, they were astonished at His wonderful teaching.

And as the day went past, blind and lame persons were brought to Him in the Temple, and He healed them ; and the people were glad, and rejoiced, and the children who were there ran in and out among the beautiful pillars, repeating the joyful cries of yesterday when Jesus rode into the city—

“ Hosanna to the Son of King David ! ” they shouted. “ Hosanna to the Son of King David ! ” But when the chief Lawyers and priests saw what Jesus was doing, and heard the children shouting “ Hosanna ! ” till the courts echoed, they were very angry ; and pretending it was not Him but the children they were annoyed with, they came to Him, exclaiming angrily—

“ Dost Thou hear what these children are saying ? ” No doubt in their long white robes and strange linen bonnets, they had solemnly scolded the children, and tried to show them that they did wrong ; or they may have caught and cuffed

them. But even the children had lost respect for the priests, and felt that Jesus was better than they, and they would not cease to shout their joyful "Hosannas !" wherever they went. To see these bright little boys with lithe limbs and dark eyes praising Jesus, and defying them within their own Temple, was more than the priests could bear ; and in a moment of weakness they asked Him to help them to put down this insurrection of infants, this open rebellion of babes. His answer annoyed them, for He used the very words of the Bible—

"Have you never read these words, 'Out of the mouth of babes and little children cometh perfect praise?'" Jesus was not the One to bid the fresh sweet lips of children, His dearest friends, cease praising God ; for, compared with the shouts of the crowd which followed Him yesterday, the children's "Hosannas !" in the Temple were purity and innocence itself, and once more He gave them the highest place of all. And the priests went away, doubly annoyed because He would not help them.

On Monday evening Jesus again went out of the city with His disciples, and before the sudden darkness fell upon the land He had passed over the ridge of Olivet, to spend the night once more at Bethany.

Remember that no one can praise Jesus better than a bright sunny child. Boys are the sweetest singers in any choir. Children's voices were ever dearest to Jesus, and these little fellows knew that He loved them, and ran about among the Temple porches shouting praises, sweeter far than all the music and singing of the great Levite band, or the silver trumpets of the priests.

Hosanna ! loud hosanna
The little children sang,
Through pillared porch and temple
Their happy voices rang ;
To Jesus, who had blessed them
And clasped them to His breast,
These children's joyful praises
Were sweetest and the best.

HIS LAST DAY IN THE TEMPLE.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Early on Tuesday morning Jesus came again with His disciples from Bethany, walking over the hill to Jerusalem before the sun was high, while yet the heavy dews of night sparkled in the grass, and the morning song of birds came up from the olive groves and distant rose gardens ; and as they went, they passed the withered fig tree, which reminded the disciples of their want of faith yesterday. With the earliest of the worshippers they entered the Temple, into which the buyers and sellers and money changers were now afraid to go ; but which was soon crowded with the fresh arrivals of country people, who increased every day as the Festival came nearer. Walking up and down between the pillars of the porch, Jesus spoke to the crowds, and people came to listen who had never heard Him speak before, and those who had heard Him came again, delighted with His words, and He was soon the principal person there. The priests wished to have Him stopped, for their own Teachers were deserted when Jesus began to speak ; but they were afraid to touch One who was so much liked, for fear of a riot, which would bring the Roman soldiers down upon them from the tower of Antonia through the private passage into the Temple, to punish them for not keeping better order at a Festival. The priests consulted with the Lawyers and the Temple authorities, who would do nothing while Jesus was surrounded with so many friends ; but they resolved upon a plan which they thought would expose Him to the people as a false Teacher. He was not a member of the council that had charge of the Temple, nor had He ever been examined or ordained by any Doctors of the Law and declared fit to teach, as all their recognised Teachers had to be ; and they would show the people that He had thus no right to order the buyers and sellers out, or to be a Teacher.

And so a few were chosen to go to Jesus, of chief priests, in their curious linen dresses, of chief Lawyers, in long robes,

and head men of the city, rich Sadducees, well known to the people as men of high position and great power. They wished to put Jesus down, to silence Him by superior authority, and have Him turned out of the Temple as a cheat. As He walked on the marble pavement in the porch, they came through the people, hugging their garments about them, lest they should be defiled at this important time by touching a common person, and standing before Him, one of them spoke to Him loudly, saying—

“Tell us by what authority Thou doest these things”—meaning, what right had He to say who should come into the Temple? What right had He to teach at all? And the people crowded nearer to hear the answer of Jesus. But this young Countryman, this barefooted Galilean, was not afraid of their show of power. He had a question to ask them first—

“I will ask you one question,” Jesus replied, “and if you answer Me, I also will answer you what right I have to do these things.” And the chief men began to feel uncomfortable, as He looked calmly at them. “Was the teaching of John the Baptist, from God, or of men?” adding, as a challenge before all the people, “Answer Me!” And at once a hum of conversation rose from the crowd, as the priests and Lawyers drew closer together and argued with each other with finger on palm, and grave shaking of heads, for they could not agree about the answer. The calm gaze of Jesus confused and flurried them as He waited to hear what they would say about His dead Cousin; and they forgot to press their own question in discussing His one,—Was John the Baptist a Teacher from God who spoke the truth, or did he tell lies? was the question.

“If we say John was a Teacher from God,” they whispered to each other, “then Jesus will say to us, ‘John told you that I am the Christ, and why do you not believe the message of a Teacher from God?’ and if we should answer that John was not a Teacher from God, then this crowd of people, into which we have come, will set up a cry, and stone us, for all the people believe that John the Baptist was from God.” And

they resolved to say they did not know whether John the Baptist was a Teacher from God or no, and then to press Jesus to answer their first question ; forgetting that this would be a strange confession of ignorance for Teachers of the people to make. Having all agreed upon one answer, they turned to Jesus again—

“ We do not know,” was the short reply of their spokesman.

“ Neither will I tell you, by what right I do these things,” was the equally short answer of Jesus ; and, turning to the people, He resumed teaching, with a direct bearing on the chief men who stood by. And thus, once more, in their own great and impressive Temple, the priests and Lawyers were silenced and humiliated, all the more so that they had come with such a show of learning and authority to stop Jesus, and they had to choose between waiting there to be further rebuked by Him, or slipping away back to their companions in the council hall to tell them of their defeat.

Learn from this, the shamefulness of hypocrisy and falsehood, for these men, as all the people knew, had often said that John the Baptist was not a Teacher who spoke the truth, and yet they thought to dissemble and to deceive Jesus ; but they must have winced under His dark eyes. Keep thou truth in thy heart and on thy tongue, and thou wilt have the joy of knowing that the eyes of Jesus would have ever rested lovingly on thee. In the words of William Shakespeare—

“ To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

THE FRUITS OF HEAVEN.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Having silenced the men who had come to stop Him from teaching any more in the Temple, Jesus went on to tell the people a story with a meaning, to show how wicked the Pharisees were ; and yet, that even Pharisees, might change their lives and become good. And the story is very interesting to little boys,

for it is about two sons, one of whom had a quick temper, but a good heart, while the other had fine manners, but did not speak the truth. Their father had a small vineyard, and needed their help to dig it, and to dress the vines, and gather in the ripe purple grapes. And some Pharisees stood near to hear what Jesus would say next, and this is what they heard—

What do you think? A man had two sons ; and he came to the first one and said to him, ‘Child, go and work in the vineyard to-day.’ But this son was quick-tempered, and wished to do something else, and he refused, saying shortly, ‘I will not.’ Now, his father was grieved, but he said nothing, and the son went off to do something else of his own. But as he went, he was sorry for what he had said to his father, and after a little, he gave up what he was at of his own, and slipped away into the vineyard, and began to work as his father had asked him. Now when the first son refused to go, the father went to his other son and said the same thing to him, ‘Go and work in the vineyard to-day.’ ‘I go, sir,’ this son replied, as if paying great respect to his father’s wishes ; but he said what was not true, for he did not intend to go, and went away to do something else, and did not go near the vineyard. Turning to the Pharisees, Jesus asked—

“Which of these sons did what his father wished?” The question was not which *had said* he would do it ; and there was only one answer, and afraid to blunder again, a Pharisee replied—

“The first son did what his father wished.” He had answered rightly, but he did not know that his answer would bring such a severe rebuke upon them. For Jesus told the Pharisees in grave tones, as a warning against their pretended goodness, that the worst people in the country would go into the Kingdom of Heaven before them, and He told them why ; and they could not deny it. John the Baptist, He said, had come to them as a guide and Teacher of the people, telling them of the Kingdom of Heaven among men, and they would not listen to him ; while some of the worst people in the land

had listened and believed, and turned to goodness. Jesus said also, that worst of all, when the Pharisees saw the people changing and becoming good, who were openly bad, they were not even then ashamed of their own secret wickedness. Thus He made the meaning of the story plain, that the bad people were like the son who was sorry; while the secretly bad Pharisees were like the son with fine manners, who did not obey his father.

And so the Pharisees could tell their companions in the council hall, that Jesus had said again that the worst people in the land were better than the Pharisees; and each message like this was a fresh faggot on the fire of their hatred of Him.

It was the time of year when much work was being done in the vineyards, in the vales, and on the terraced hill-sides, preparing the springing vines for the growth of Summer, and as there were many country people in the Temple who had come to the Festival from the hills and valleys where the grapes grew, they all understood the next story which Jesus told. He told it standing amid the marble pillars of the outer porch, listened to by those who were close round Him, and heard by the hundreds of people who moved about in the sunshine in the open court beyond. The story was about a rich man who lent his vineyard to some bad men who were to give him the fruit, and of what those bad men did. And this is the story—

There was once a man, who planted a piece of ground with vines, and put a high prickly hedge round it, and dug a place in the ground in which to press the juice from the ripe grapes, and he built a watch-tower to guard it from thieves, and he lent the vineyard to men who were to attend to it, and went away to travel in a far distant country. When Autumn came and the time for ripe grapes was near, he sent servants to get the fruit from these men. But they took the first servant who came and beat him, and sent him away with nothing. And the owner sent a second servant, and him the men wounded on the head, hurting him shamefully, and sent him also back with nothing. Then the owner sent a third servant, and him also they wounded, and put out of the

vineyard. But the owner sent yet another servant, whom they killed ; and many more he sent, some of whom the men beat, and some they killed. And the owner said to himself, "What shall I do ? I will send my much-loved son ; perhaps they will honour him ?" And he sent his only son, as the last of all, saying, "They will respect my son." But when the bad men in their watch-tower saw him coming, they said to each other—"This is the heir ! Let us kill him, and we shall get the vineyard !" And they dragged him out of the vineyard and killed him. Then Jesus paused in His story, and asked this question of those who were listening—

"When the owner of this vineyard shall come to visit it what will he do to these men ?"

"He will miserably destroy those bad men," some one answered at once, "and will let the vineyard to other men, who will give him the fruits in their season." But others called out—

"God forbid it !" They had guessed the meaning of the story, which was this. The world was the vineyard, the servants were God's messengers, of whom John the Baptist was one, and Jesus Himself was the much-loved Son, while the priests and Lawyers, some of whom were now before Him, with murder in their hearts, were the cruel and bad men of the story. Turning to the place where the last speaker stood, Jesus warned them all, saying earnestly—

"What is that which is written ? Did you never read in your Bibles in the 118th psalm :

" 'The stone which the builders rejected, hath been made the chief stone in the corner of the house.'"

" 'This is God's doing. It is wonderful to us.'"

The people understood Him at once. He was the One whom they were rejecting, but God would lift Him up to the highest place. And as they looked at Him, some were angry, and some wondered, for instead of being afraid, His words were growing bolder. Turning to the Pharisees and Lawyers who were there, He continued, "Therefore I say to you that the Kingdom of Heaven will be taken away from

you, and given to them who bring forth good deeds, which are the fruits of Heaven. Whoever falleth upon this corner Stone of which I speak, shall be broken to pieces, but upon whom It shall fall, it will scatter him like dust." And Jesus ceased speaking for a time.

When the priests heard Him say that the Kingdom of Heaven would be taken away from them, and that He would crush them like a great corner stone, they became more angry, and sought to have Him taken a prisoner at once. They may even have given orders for this to be done, but again they changed their minds for fear of the people, who now looked upon Jesus as a man sent from God, and they gave up the thought of taking Him that day. But the Pharisees would listen to no more of His teaching, and withdrew to their companions in the council hall, to tell them that it would not be safe to try to take Jesus a prisoner just now, and that the only way was to find some method by which to get the people to turn against Him. But Jesus continued where He was, apparently not caring what the priests might do.

Remember what are the fruits of the Kingdom of Heaven here,—love, truth, gentleness, peace, hope, joy, reverence, hanging like ripe apples amid the green leaves of thy young life. These thou wilt give in faithful service to Jesus, who asketh thee often what thou art growing as fruit for God in thy little part of His Kingdom.

THE WEDDING GARMENT.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Sitting in one of the arches of the Women's court of the great Temple, Jesus resumed teaching, and the people pressed closer round Him to hear what He would say, now that the Pharisees and Lawyers were gone. Would He speak of their attempt to stop Him, or their threats to take Him a prisoner, which the looks of the people had made them afraid to carry out? Would He cease telling stories, and say when

He would declare Himself King? The arches were higher than the pavement, and the people stood out in the great square, with their bright kerchiefs shading their eyes from the sun, as they looked up at the white figure of the young Galilean.

In a low voice Jesus began, and they could hear that He was speaking once more of that beautiful Heaven, into which His dark eyes seemed to gaze, with a calm abstracted look, as He thought out the story. The priests were gone. He thought but of the people before Him, who had long been taught that Heaven was for Jews only; and that was not true. The truth about Heaven was to be told by Him to the Jews first, but it would spread to all nations. He said again that the Kingdom of Heaven among men was like a great marriage feast, to which those who were first asked, would not come, and that the Master would fill His house with others—a story in some parts like the one He told at the Ruler's dinner-table in the Peræa about three months before, and this is it.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a King who gave a great feast at the marriage of his son, and sent his servants to call in all the people that had been asked to the feast, but they would not come. Then he sent out other servants with this message—

“Say to them that are asked, ‘I have made ready my house, mine oxen and my lambs are killed, and all things are prepared; come in to my marriage-feast.’” And the servants took the King's message to them that were asked, but they paid no heed to it and went other ways, the farmer to his farm, and the merchant to his goods. But some did much worse, for they took hold of some of the King's servants, and treated them very cruelly, and killed others. Now this was what the Jews had done to John the Baptist when he said that the Kingdom of Heaven was near, and to other good men, who had come with a message from God. But the story went on to tell how the people who would not come to the feast were punished.

Now the King was very angry, and sent out his soldiers, who punished these bad men, and burned their towns. And

he said to his servants again : " The marriage-feast is ready, but those whom I first asked to come did not deserve it, go therefore to the places where two roads meet, and ask all the people whom you see, to come to my marriage-feast." And the servants went out to the roads and gathered together all whom they could find, good and bad, rich and poor, Jew or stranger, and brought them in, and so the great hall was filled with guests.

This was the first part of the story, which meant that the Jews had refused to listen to men like John the Baptist, who came to tell them the truth about the Kingdom of Heaven. And Jesus went on to tell the people the second part of the story about the marriage garment. Thou wilt now suppose that the guests are all reclining round low tables in a brightly lighted hall. Each one as he came in at the door had received a white wedding-robe to wear, which they all took but one man, who would not wear it, thinking he was good enough without it ; and he came in also and sat down at a table in his own clothing. It was night. All was dark outside, while the banqueting hall within was warm and bright, and when the great door was shut and barred, people gathered outside crying to be let in, but they were too late ; and they wept.

When the feast was about to begin, a beautiful curtain was drawn aside, and the King in richly embroidered robes of purple, and wearing his gold crown, came in and sat down on a white ivory throne, and looked over the hundreds of guests who had come to his son's marriage-feast all with their white robes on,—all but one. He noticed at once the man who had on no white robe.

" Friend, how didst thou come in hither, not having on a wedding garment?" the King asked, looking at him sternly. And he waited for a reply, but the man had none to give. He dared not look at the King and say he was good enough without the King's robe ; for he had no right to be there without it. He wished into the Kingdom, but he would not wear the robe.

"Servants!" said the King angrily, "tie his hands and his feet, and cast him out into the darkness, where there is weeping and mourning." And the servants at once did as they were told, and the man was put out. That was the end of the story. The people did not need to be told that God was the King, and that all who would have Heaven must obey Him; and Jesus added, as a warning to those who heard Him, "Many are asked, but few are chosen."

And thou, my child, wilt learn the meaning of the wedding garment. It means love and obedience to God, without which no one can have Heaven. See, then, that thou hast this life-wrought wedding-robe, adorned with pearls of good thoughts and kind deeds, and embroidered with the gold of truthful words; a robe fit for an angel.

A ROMAN PENNY.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

While Jesus was speaking to the people who crowded round Him in one of the side porches of the Women's Court of the Temple, the priests were holding a small meeting in one of their rooms in the Priests' Court above. They had failed to stop Him by asking for His authority, they were afraid to take Him a prisoner openly because of the friends He had among the people, and what were they to do? because, almost within hearing of where they sat, He was at that moment speaking against them to a large crowd of listeners. As a council of Pharisees and Sadducees, they found themselves unable to withstand Jesus, and so they asked in some of their old enemies the political Herodians to help them, for they also hated Him. Jesus had disregarded the authority of the Pharisees, and they thought that if they could get the Roman power to bear on Him, that would quickly crush Him. They talked of sending spies into the crowd to overhear Him speaking against the Romans, for they felt sure He would do that as the Christ, when He thought no one was listening who would tell. Some one proposed rather that a spy should go down into

the crowd and pretend to be a friend, and entice Jesus to speak against the Roman Emperor, by asking Him a direct question, and then they would tell Pilate, the Roman Governor, what He had said, and have Him taken by Roman soldiers. This was agreed to, for they believed that as the Christ, He would stir up the people to fight the Romans. What should the question be? It must be one that whether Jesus answered "Yes" or "No" would get Him into trouble with either the Romans or the people. Now there was a tax of one penny for each man, called the poll tax, which the people had to pay the Romans, and which they hated to pay, and though the Pharisees said it should be paid and the Herodians said it should not, they thought it would be a good question to catch Jesus with. If He should tell the people that they ought to pay the tax, the people would cry out against Him; while if He should say that they should not pay it, the Roman governor would at once take Him a prisoner for speaking against the Roman tax. The Pharisees remembered how He had put them into just such a difficulty in the morning with His question about John the Baptist. And so they chose some of the young Pharisee scholars who were not well known, and told them to pretend they were friends of Jesus, and ask Him to tell them whether He thought the Pharisees or the Herodians were right about paying the Roman tax. And thus these old Pharisees instructed their scholars in the art of deception and lying.

As the forenoon of Tuesday advanced, these young spies mixed with the ever-moving and strangely dressed crowd in the Women's Court, until, quite unknown to the people, they were standing apparently listening earnestly to Jesus. As usual with Teachers, questions were put to Jesus by His followers, which He answered; and when the proper time came, a smooth-tongued young Pharisee, indicating that he spoke for those near him, addressed Jesus in these fine words—

"Teacher! we know that Thou art true, and that Thou dost speak and teach the way of God in truth, and art not afraid of any man, for Thou carest not for the rank of men,—

tell us, therefore, what thou thinkest. Is it right or is it not right for us to pay the penny tax to the Roman Emperor, Cæsar? The young Pharisee had begun as he was told, by praising Jesus for His good teaching, and for not being afraid, and then as if a friend, he asked for His private thoughts about the Roman poll tax. They believed that Jesus secretly intended to be declared King by the people, and as the Christ, to fight against the Roman power, and they hoped by getting Him to speak against the Romans in the Temple, to have Him captured at once and put to death by the governor as a stirrer up of sedition. Jesus looked calmly at these foolish young men, the weak tools of older hypocrites. He knew that such a question as this was not put by true friends of His. They praised Him overmuch, and sought to entangle Him with politics and the hated question of the poll tax.

“Why do you tempt me, you hypocrites?” He exclaimed, with a glance of His dark eyes that made the young men shrink back. They were discovered! He knew they were enemies! “Show me the tribute money,” Jesus continued, not waiting for their answer. “Bring me a Roman penny, that I may see it!” None of the young Pharisees had a penny, and while one was being got, Jesus stood silent and angry, and the young men, ashamed to go away, wondered what He would do, but the people knew it was another plot of the priests. The penny was brought and handed to Jesus; of brown copper, with the head of the Emperor Augustus Cæsar, upon it, and words round the edge, just like an English penny.

“Whose head and whose words are these?” Jesus asked the spies, holding up the penny that all might see the head of the Roman Emperor upon it.

“Cæsar’s!” the young men answered, not knowing what would follow.

“Then,” said Jesus, “give to Cæsar what belongeth to Cæsar, and give to God what belongeth to God.” He did not answer “Yes” or “No,” for He would not interfere in the politics of the country, and the strife of rival parties; nor

would He be a judge between disputants. He had told Peter at Capernaum to pay the Temple tax; He would not decide between the young man and his brother in the Galilean village; He would not judge the woman brought to Him in the Temple, and now He would take no part in this burning dispute about the poll tax. The Christ would not be a prince of war, who would fight the enemies of His nation, but a Teacher of the will of God to men, who would raise up goodness and conquer evil within them. He had come to speak of Heaven to the people, not to settle disputes; and His answer meant that they were to obey the Romans, but to obey God more.

It had been arranged what the spies were to do, if Jesus answered "Yes" or "No;" but they could make nothing of His reply, and remained silent and confused, defeated again before the people, and they went off as soon as they could, to tell their masters what had happened. The Pharisees and Herodians were much surprised in their private room to hear the answer, for they had felt certain they would get Jesus into trouble this time. But He resumed teaching as though nothing had happened.

Remember, then, how foolish and wicked it was of these young men to come to Jesus and praise Him in words which they did not mean, and all because they were told by older men to do so; and be thou careful, in song or in prayer, never to use insincere words to God, which thou dost not think about, or mean.

AS THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL A.D. 34.

The Sadducees of Jerusalem had up to this time taken no special interest in Jesus. They were the aristocracy of the nation, rich and powerful, who cared little for religion, and despised the strict rules of the Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, Herodians, and other sects, and they had treated the young Carpenter of Nazareth as quite beneath their notice. They

did not believe in the rising of the dead, or in Heaven, or in the life of the spirit after death; and knowing that Jesus taught such things, they thought they could easily show the misguided people that this young Teacher from the country could be silenced at once, by putting one of the questions to Him which old grey-headed doctors of the Law could not answer. To show their contempt, they selected a question which was commonly looked upon as ludicrous, so that they might cause the people to laugh at His teaching about Heaven. They also wished to show the Pharisees how easily they could dispose of this Man of the people.

And as Tuesday advanced, a group of these great men, with embroidered robes and turbans, jewelled finger-rings, and hair fragrant with costly oils, came through among the pillars of the porch, and stood a little way off listening with smiles on their faces as they heard Jesus speaking earnestly of Heaven to the people. Stepping forward, one of them, with an educated tone and face of mock gravity, put the absurd question to Him which they had made up. He first spoke of a law of Moses, made fifteen hundred years before, and then told a story about a supposed woman who had had seven husbands.

"Teacher," he began, "Moses wrote that if a man should die without children, his brother should marry his widow and have children. Now there were seven brothers, and the first married a wife and died without children, then the second brother married the widow and died without children, and the third brother did the same, and so did all the seven brothers, but they left no children, and last of all the woman died also." That was the Sadducees' made-up story of the seven men who had died one by one in proper order, and of the woman who died last, and it was so silly that the people smiled who heard it, and the other Sadducees laughed; but his question was even more foolish.

"Whose wife will she be in Heaven," he asked sharply, "for all the seven brothers had her as a wife?" And some in the crowd thought this very clever, and in the pause which

followed, the people set themselves to answer the riddle, not without mirth, as they went over the ridiculous story again. Whose wife? The first, or the last! For many of the people thought that they would have bodies of flesh and blood in Heaven after death, and that their clothing and armour and jewels, if buried in the grave with them, might perhaps go to Heaven also. But the Sadducee had been too careless, too insulting in his story. A woman with two husbands in Heaven, was a common joke among them, and he had added other five husbands to make it more amusing. They would gladly have allowed Jesus time to consider His answer, but He needed none, and replied at once, rebuking their folly with calm seriousness.

"You do not know the Bible, nor the power of God," He said, "and so you are mistaken. The men of this world marry, and women are given in marriage, but they that are thought worthy to enter Heaven hereafter neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in Heaven, sons of God, and sons of the rising again who cannot die." Thus they were answered in so unexpected a way that they forgot to ask Jesus how He knew that there was no marrying in that Heaven, and that men were as angels there; but they accepted His answer with silent respect. He had something more, however, to say to these haughty men who did not believe in Heaven after death or in any future life. They had spoken of Moses, as though they believed him when he wrote about marriage. Did they believe him when he wrote about a life beyond the grave, which was something of far greater importance?

"But, about the rising again of the dead," Jesus continued: That the dead are raised, Moses sheweth; for have you not read in Exodus, his second book, in the place where he writes of the burning bush in the wilderness, that God said to him, '*I am* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob'? Now God is not the God of their dead bodies, but of their living spirits, for all men live unto God. You Sadducees do err greatly in saying there is no life after death." Again they could not

answer Him, but stood astonished, a sight for the common people, convicted of trifling with great and solemn things, and of not knowing their own Bibles. For they could not deny that God could not mean that He was the God of the dead bodies of these good men of old, but rather of their living spirits, like the angels in Heaven. And the people who stood by were amazed at the teaching of Jesus, for they had never heard anything like it. There were Lawyers there also, who knew every word of the books of Moses by heart, and when they heard His answer they were astonished at His wisdom, and how well He understood the Bible. Nor were they sorry to see their haughty enemies the Sadducees convicted of error, and forgetting for a moment their hatred of Jesus in their satisfaction at the defeat of the Sadducees, a Lawyer called aloud—

“Teacher, Thou hast answered well. Thou hast well said.” And the Sadducees went away very much amazed, for they were afraid to ask Jesus any more questions after this their first and last encounter in the Temple. And thus the second move that day in the combination of His enemies to ridicule the teaching of Jesus before the people, ended in they themselves being made ridiculous.

And thou wilt remember, from these solemn words of Jesus, that there is a life beyond the grave, where the spirits of good people shall be as the angels of Heaven. More than that thou needst not know, for that is enough to make thee do thy best in thy life here, to prepare thyself for the perfect life of thy spirit with God hereafter.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Some of the older Lawyers and Pharisees were listening when Jesus answered the Sadducee, as He taught in the great Temple Porch where the people thronged and crowded among the splendid marble pillars, and forgetting

their own former defeats, they thought they would make one more attempt to catch Him with a careful question. These Lawyers, who were the Teachers of the people, taught what was called "the Law" from the five books of Moses, which contained the Ten Commandments, and round these Books they had made, it is said, quite ten thousand rules of one kind or another, by arguing and discussing for many years in their schools and colleges. Some of these rules were of more importance than others. They were of two kinds—rules *to do* certain things, and rules to *keep from doing* certain things; and some men spent their whole lives in studying and explaining and trying to add to them. It was their Jewish theology.

A Lawyer had called out to Jesus, "Thou hast answered well!" when the Sadducees were defeated, and perhaps it was he who asked the next question. It was a common thing for them to dispute as to which is the greatest of the ten commandments, and he wished to hear what Jesus would say about it.

"Which is the greatest commandment?" he asked. Jesus did not hesitate, for He had answered almost the same question to a Lawyer at Jericho only a few months before.

"Hear, O people!" He replied, speaking loud enough for the hundreds who were standing out in the great sunny court to hear Him. "The Lord is one God! Thou shalt love God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength. This is the first commandment." He had answered the Lawyer's question, but He went on to do more, saying, "And this is the second commandment, which is like the first. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. *On these two commandments hang all the Bible.*" He answered this Lawyer fully, because He saw from his face that he really wished to know the right answer, which was, that if a man loved God and loved man, he needed no more commandments, nor any of the ten thousand rules of the Pharisees, which were only useless amplifications of the two great commandments on which the Bible rested.

"Love thy neighbour," thought the Lawyer; and he

knew how these Pharisees hated each other, and liked to find out their neighbours' faults. And, touched with the manner of Jesus, who looked to him so young and sincere, and different from the Pharisees, in a subdued voice frankly confessing the great fault of his sect,—forms and ceremonies,—and that true religion is very simple, needing neither rules, ceremonies, nor sacrifices to keep it alive, but only guidance from God, he exclaimed—

“Truly, Teacher, thou hast said rightly that God is One, and that there is no other God than He, and that to love Him with all my heart, understanding, and strength, and to love my neighbour as myself, is greater than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices of the priests.” The words of Jesus had appealed to the Lawyer's sense of honesty and fair play, and out of pure admiration for the simple truth of the young Teacher's answer, he thus spoke out his mind, condemning his own Teachers, and saying that these two plain rules were worth all the learning of their religious schools, and all the services of the splendid Temple in which they stood, with its altar-fires and sacrifices, which they could see smoking in the Priests' Court above them. It was a bold and daring thing to say under the very arches of the Temple, and while His companions looked at the Lawyer in dismay and wonder, Jesus saw the change in his mind, and said these few earnest, thrilling words to him—

“Thou art not far from the Kingdom of Heaven,” meaning that the Spirit of God was rising in him. After this strange scene, in which, before their very eyes, the Pharisees saw one of their own side changed into an admirer of Jesus, they gave up all hope of trying to catch Him with questions, for His wisdom and knowledge made them afraid to try again. Now, after answering a question, Jesus frequently asked another back, and before the Lawyer and his friends went away, He asked them a question out of the Bible which put them again into a difficulty, for they said they were able to teach and to explain all the Bible.

**“What do you think about the Christ?” He asked.
“Whose Son is He?”**

“The Son of King David,” some one answered, meaning that the Christ would be descended from him.

“How is it, then,” Jesus asked, **“that if the Christ is King David’s son, King David should, in the 110th Psalm, call Him ‘Lord,’ saying—**

“‘The Lord said to my Lord.’

“‘Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?’

“If King David calleth the Christ ‘Lord,’ how can the Christ be his Son?” Now this was a very confusing question, for no Jew would ever think of calling his son “Lord,” and why then should King David call the Christ “Lord,” who was to be descended from him like a son? And the Lawyers remained silent, for they could not answer the question. The answer, of course, is that King David called the Christ “Lord” because He is also the Son of God. And thus Jesus showed these Lawyers that He could put questions to them out of their own Bible, that with all their learning they were not able to answer. And they were so surprised at His wonderful knowledge and power that from that Tuesday neither Lawyers, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, nor any other of His enemies ever tried to catch Him again with questions. He had beaten them all in open discussion, and they were afraid of Him.

And thou, my child, wilt remember what is the whole duty of man,—to love God and love men,—for if we do these, all other good will follow from them. No one could be cruel, or untruthful, or proud, if he truly loved God and loved men ; and remember that these two things are greater than all services in churches, and all sermons, and even prayers, for they are the true life-service of thy spirit toward God.

SERPENTS, VIPERS, HYPOCRITES !

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Jusus had now publicly put to shame the Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, Rulers, Lawyers, Priests. Three times on that Tuesday they had tried to have Him stopped, and every time He had defeated them before the people, with increasing force, winning praise and admiration even from His enemies. During the past three years of His teaching through all Judæa, Galilee, Samaria, and the Peræa, and particularly whenever He came to Jerusalem, the Pharisees and Lawyers had watched Him and tried to entrap Him into offences for which He might be punished. Their highest council had resolved that He should be killed, and had issued orders to the people to help to have Him taken a prisoner. He was now about to close His teaching in that grand Temple. Never again would His voice ring through the beautiful marble arches and the pillars of its porches, and out into the great crowded courts, or His feet tread their rich coloured pavements. He had met and defeated His enemies again and again in different parts of the country. Now He was about to denounce and unmask them in their own magnificent Temple, in language which would fall like scourge strokes upon them, heaping upon their heads many of the severe things which He had said about them throughout the country, and adding more. He knew it would make them hate Him with fiercer hatred, but He had made up His mind to die, in order to finish His work, and was resolved that the people should know the kind of men who ruled over them and taught them falsely, and that they should carry His words far and wide away from this great Festival into every house in the country.

It is towards the afternoon. The sky is still blue overhead, but broad cool shadows are cast from the high walls and towers of the Temple, into the great open court. The porch is thronged with dusky-faced people, who have followed the controversies of that day with increasing interest, amazed at and admiring the daring of this young Countryman, who could

· speak thus, with the sentence of death already gone out against Him. He sits, strong, earnest, beautiful, clad from head to foot in His white Galilean tunic, His dark eyes melting at times with pity, and again flashing with indignation and anger, while round Him stand His weather-beaten disciples, themselves young, and awestruck with His fearless bearing, and in a wider circle still are His wild, excited, and determined Galilean friends. His face has lost some of the ruddy hue which it wore amid the hills of Nazareth ; but His voice has still its wonderful charm, as in loud tones He warns all who hear Him, disciples and people, against false Teachers.

“The Lawyers and the Pharisees,” He said, “sit in the place of Moses as your religious Teachers. Do what they tell you, obey their words ; but do not copy their deeds, for they speak well, but do ill. Whatever they do, they do it to be seen ; for they like to walk about in long robes and to wear broad phylacteries, as a show of goodness ; they like to be greeted in the market, and to sit in the highest seats in the church, and in the best places at feasts ; but they rob widows’ houses, and for a pretence of goodness make long prayers ; but they shall only receive the greater punishment.” Thus Jesus calmly warned the people against Teachers who taught one thing and did another ; the only true Teacher being he who does what he tells others to do.”

“These Lawyers,” Jesus continued, now speaking mainly to His disciples and those close about Him, “like to be called ‘Teachers’ by their fellow-men ; but be not you called Teachers, for I alone am your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man the father of your spirit, for One only is the Father of your spirit, God in Heaven. Neither be called ‘Masters,’ for I alone am your Master. He that is greatest among you shall be as your servant ; whoever setteth himself up, shall be brought down ; and whoever is lowly, shall be raised up.” Thus they were not to set up one man over another in religious things, for in such matters all men are equal with each other and before God. There were to be no fathers, teachers, nor masters among men in religion ; but

they who wished to help others in such things were to be called servants. God was to be their Heavenly Father, Jesus their Teacher. And now He changed His manner, as He turned from His disciples to the Lawyers and Pharisees, who had come back again to listen, His voice ringing far out into the crowded court, as He cried, so that people stopped to listen.

“But woe to you! ye Lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you shut the Kingdom of Heaven against the people, and neither go in yourselves nor allow them that are entering, to go in. You would go over land and sea to get one follower, and when you have got him, you make him twice more a child of badness than yourselves.” Thus He touched upon the young Pharisees who had been sent by their masters that forenoon, to praise Him with lying lips. And, speaking of what the Pharisee Teachers taught, He showed how bad was their teaching about oaths.

“Woe to you, ye blind guides!” He said, “who teach that a man who sweareth by the Temple, is not bound to keep his oath; but that he is bound, if he sweareth by the gold of the Temple. You fools and blind! for which is greater, the Temple or the gold upon the Temple? You say also that whoever sweareth by the great altar in the Priest’s Court, is not bound, but whoever sweareth by the gift upon the altar, is bound. You fools and blind! for which is greater, the gift, or the altar which maketh the gift sacred? Now, whoever sweareth by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all that is upon it. And whoever sweareth by the Temple, sweareth by it, and God, who dwelleth there. And whoever sweareth by Heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him who sitteth upon it.” Thus Jesus exposed the foolish and bad teaching of the Pharisees which allowed the people to make certain kinds of oaths; for He had told them before that men were not to swear by anything, or make oaths at all, and that all such things are bad.

“Woe to you! ye Lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites!” He resumed, “you are blind guides who, as the proverb

saith, 'Strain out the gnat and swallow a camel'—meaning, that they were very particular in keeping their own little rules, but that they broke the laws of God. "You are like white-washed graves," He continued, "which look clean outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones." So also you seem to men to be good, but are really wicked hypocrites. Woe to you ! ye Lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for you ornament the graves of the men of God of the past, saying that if you had lived when your fathers lived, you would not have killed these good men. But you are true sons of your fathers who killed these men. Fill up, then, to the brim, the measure of your fathers' cruelty ! You serpents ! You children of vipers ! you shall not escape punishment !"

Jesus said much more, but this is enough to show how He scourged these bad men before the people ; and it is a remarkable sign of the fear of the priests and the sympathy of the people, that He was not once interrupted by His enemies during this scathing attack upon the Teachers, some of whom were at that moment teaching in the porches, within sight and hearing of what He said ; but they laid by His words in their memories, and made a deep resolution not to rest by night or by day till they had Jesus taken a prisoner and saw Him dead, for they knew that as long as He lived He would continue to speak against them. And these words of Jesus are all the more terrible and impressive that they came from One so gentle and so kind, the Friend and Lover of little children. Still He had nothing but scorn and anger for the hypocrisy of bad men. And so truthfully did He measure these false Teachers that the word "Pharisee" has since become only another name for "hypocrite."

When He stopped speaking, many of the people went away, and as they went, they talked over the manner in which He had denounced the Teachers and Pharisees, and many shook their heads, thinking that soon He would pay for this with His life ; but they did not know that He whom they saw that day so full of life and power had only three more days to live.

And thou, my child, wilt remember that of all the forms

of wickedness, hypocrisy is the worst. That men should teach falsely is bad, but that men should pretend to teach good things and be good men, while all the time they live bad lives, is to place badness in the seat of goodness, and to defile the very springs from which goodness should flow.

THE WIDOW'S FARTHING.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It was now Tuesday afternoon, the teaching of Jesus in the Temple was over, and the sun in the Western sky, that kindled with slanting rays on the golden spikes on the Holy place, told that the hour was near when the services would end for the day and the Temple gates be closed. Never again would Jesus go up those broad marble steps that rose from court to court, nor pass through those great doors overlaid with gold. As He went out of the Women's Court, He paused at that part called the Treasury, where were the thirteen large money chests, into which the people put their gifts as they passed into the Temple, and He sat down for a little to watch the people there. These chests were placed along the wall, to gather money for the Temple and its services, each chest having a name upon it, saying what it was for—"Incense," "Gold dishes," "Wood," and other things; and on the top of each was a brass mouth shaped like a trumpet, and all who came to the Temple were expected to put money into some of them.

As Jesus sat there, He saw the rich Sadducee with his fine robes, come forward and fling in a handful of money, looking round him, as with the sound of gold it fell ringing into the money-box; then came the city merchant, who carefully dropped in silver, that fell pattering on the gold; and country people too, who slipped in heavy copper money, that fell with a noisy clang into the box. But Jesus noticed that the rich made far more sound and show with their money, pouring it into the brass trumpets from a height, that all might observe that they gave

gold, and He could plainly see that those who were rich cast in much money. While He looked, a poor woman came forward, and He saw from her dress that she was a widow. Coming timidly up to the boxes, she carefully took from her pocket two copper mites, which she put into one of the large brass trumpets, and they were scarcely heard, as they fell tinkling into the box, for they were so thin and small that it takes two of them to make a farthing ; but they were all she had. When Jesus saw what she had done, and how differently she gave her money from the rich men, who made so much show of their giving, He said to His disciples, as she was going away—

“I tell you truly, yonder poor woman hath cast into the Treasury more than they all ; for they have cast in money which they do not need, but she who needed it hath cast in all the money she hath, even all that she hath to live on.” He put a different value on money from that of the keepers of the Treasury. They valued the gift, by how much money was given. He valued it by how much the giver needed the money he gave. Those who did not need the gold had given but a small gift, while she who gave all she had, gave much, though it was but one farthing.

Rising, Jesus passed on through the great pillars towards the Beautiful gate of cedar wood and gold, and down the broad white steps that led into the large outer court of the Gentiles. Before Him were the rows of coloured pillars and arches, which formed Solomon’s magnificent porch, while rising in terraces behind Him were the inner Temple buildings of huge stones, with the Holy place of gold crowning the whole. He was going out of the Golden Temple for the last time, and His disciples knew it.

“Master,” said one of them, “look at what costly stones, and what buildings are here !” Now the buildings were as high as York cathedral, built of white stones, some of the huge blocks being thirteen yards long and four yards thick, while the tall pillars were of different coloured marbles, rare and costly. There were rich gifts also in the Temple, hung upon

the walls of the Priests' Court, the gifts of kings and soldiers ; the people also gave more money to the Temple than the priests could spend, so that a law had to be made to limit their giving. This magnificent place was the idol of the Jewish people.

"Look thou at these great buildings," Jesus replied, "and at all these things, for the day will come when there shall not be left here one stone standing upon another that shall not be thrown down !" The disciples did not expect such an answer. Had He said that nothing could ever throw down these immense blocks, they would have believed Him ; and yet men who go to that place now, can scarcely tell the spot where these huge stones once stood.

These were the last words of Jesus as He left the Temple to go down through the streets of the city and across the Kedron bridge to the Mount of Olives.

And what is it that can make the gift of a farthing richer than a gift of gold ? It is the feeling with which it is given. And thus the rich and the poor stand equal before Jesus, for the penny of a child, given with kindness, is more than the treasures of a gold mine given without it.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

About the time when Jesus was leaving the Temple for the last time, some strangers came wishing to speak to Him. They were foreigners, Greeks, who had come to the great Festival, for they had given up their own, and accepted a great part of the Jewish religion, and so were called "proselytes," and were allowed into the outer Court of the Temple, and up to the marble wall that divided it, but no further. One of them knew Philip, whose name is a Greek one, and they found Him, and said—

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Now Philip was not sure about bringing these strangers to Jesus, after all that had taken place that day, so he went to Andrew and told him

what they had asked, and Andrew thought they should be taken, and they brought them to Jesus, most likely while He was still upon the Mount of Olives, with a number of friends and people. The coming of these men to Jesus moved Him strangely and deeply, and made Him think of His approaching death.

"The time is coming," He exclaimed, "when I shall be glorified! I have told you truly, that unless a grain of wheat falleth into the earth and dieth, it doth not increase; but if it falleth into the earth and dieth, it shall grow and have much fruit"—meaning that His death would cause His followers to increase greatly; and He proceeded to repeat again some of the things which He had told the people in other places.

"Whoever loveth his life, shall lose it," He said, "and whoever hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto Heaven. If any one wisheth to serve Me let him follow Me, and where I am there shall he be also, and God will honour him." Thus He told His friends, that they must both serve and follow Him, even through the dark door of death which was now so near. And as He thought of death, one of those rapid painful changes came over Him, which sensitive minds feel. Not fear, not regret, but a strange dread of the horror of death, as He thought how time was sweeping on, years into days, hours, minutes! And with clasped hands and bowed head, He said, as though talking with Himself—

"Now is my Spirit troubled—and what shall I say? Shall I say 'Father, save me from this hour of death?'" And He answered Himself, saying, "It was for this that I came into the world." Then, looking up, He cried—"Father, glorify Thy name!" The people who were there heard His cry, and in the silence which followed, there came a sound, echoing down the sky, until it passed like rolling thunder over His head, which seemed to say—

"I have both glorified My name, and will glorify it again!" And the people asked in whispers of each other—

"What is it?" for they were astonished. And some said it was thunder, and others said—

"Nay, but an angel hath spoken to him." And Jesus, hearing their questions, said—

"This voice did not come for My sake, but for your sakes." And then He spoke again about His coming death in strange mysterious language such as I have spoken of before.

"Now is the judgment of this world," He said. "Now shall wickedness, the prince of this world, be cast out. *And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.*" Thus repeating what He had said elsewhere, that His death would not be defeat, but would be victory over wickedness, and that it would have a world-wide influence in drawing men in love, sympathy, and belief to Him. The people understood that He was now speaking of Himself as the Christ whom all the Jews expected, and some one exclaimed—

"We have heard out of the Bible that when the Christ cometh, He shall live for ever, and how dost Thou say that Thou shalt be nailed upon a wooden cross and killed? Who art Thou?" For the people had been taught that the Christ would never die, but be their King for ever. Jesus did not answer; but spoke of Himself once more as the Light of the World.

"For a little while is the Light with you," He said, "Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither He goeth. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may be the children of Light." Thus He spoke of His Spirit as Light, the Light which will guide every man who walks by it. And about the same time He cried loudly, calling Himself again the Light of the World, and repeating words about God and Himself which He had said at other times.

"Whoever believeth on Me," He said, "believeth not on Me only, but on God who sent Me, and whoever seeth Me, seeth also God who sent Me. I am come as a Light into the world, that whoever believeth in Me, may not live in darkness." And now He gave them a warning, which applies to all who know the words of Jesus. "If any one heareth My words, and doth not obey them, I do not condemn him; for

I came not to judge, but to save men. But all who reject Me, and will not believe My words, have something that will judge them : the very words which I have spoken, they shall judge them in the last day." Thus will their own conscience blame and condemn those who, having heard the voice of truth, do not listen to it, for it is the voice of God. And Jesus went on to repeat to the people some of the things He said in the Temple not long after He began to teach there—that His words were a message from God which He was sent to deliver—

"I have spoken," He said, "not of Myself, but God who sent Me, telleth Me what to say, and I know that His commandment is to offer you Heaven. The things, therefore, which I speak, I say them as God hath told them to Me."

These are His last words of teaching to the people, which have come down to us. The remainder of His sayings were spoken to His disciples and friends only. He now withdrew from among the people that they might go away, hiding Himself, most likely in one of the private gardens with high walls and hedges, that were on the slopes of Olivet near to the road from the Kedron bridge. What would the Greeks who were brought to Him, think of His last words? Surely, that they had never heard any one speak like Him! and when they came to hear of His terrible death, they would remember His strange earnest warnings. But there were other people there who believed on Him, and among them were some of the chief rulers in the city churches, yet they were afraid to say so openly, because their own friends the Pharisees, were so bitter against any man of position who sided with Jesus, that they would have put them out of their churches; and that was a punishment of which all leading men were afraid, for it was considered a great disgrace. And many of the common people also believed in Him.

And thou, my child, wilt learn a lesson from these chief rulers, who were afraid to say that they were on Jesus' side. The day is long gone by, when, to say thou art for Jesus

would cause thee any harm in England; yet there are people who will laugh at thee for having a simple trust in God and in all that Jesus said. But I hope thou wilt never fear to confess that Jesus is thy Friend and Guide, and that thou art glad to be known as one of His followers.

IN CLOUDS OF GLORY.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Some of the things which I am now going to tell thee, thou hast heard before, for in those last days of His life Jesus repeated to the people at Jerusalem many things which He had said in other parts of the country. And some of the things which I shall tell thee belong to those wonderful and mysterious sayings of His, about the end of the world, the destruction of Jerusalem, His coming again, and the future, which we do not understand, and which it is not profitable to guess at.

It was well on in the afternoon of Tuesday when He went with His disciples up the winding path by the Western slope of Olivet, on the way to Bethany, and as they climbed gradually higher, they came again opposite to the Temple, which was not half a mile distant across the deep Kedron valley, up from whose deeps a massive white wall was built to support the splendid buildings that stood on the top. And Jesus sat upon the green side of Olivet to gaze and meditate. The sun was going down over the great busy city, striking upon spike and plate of gold, and upon dazzling marble of Temple and Palace, while afar off, the distant mountains of Judah were fading in a haze of rose and purple. The hill on which He rested, clad in its natural beauty of Spring grass, wild flowers, and boughs of the silver leaved olive; the hill opposite, with its strong walls and hundred battle towers, its rich buildings and thousands of lives; the white foaming Kedron in the gloomy gorge below; the hour of declining day,—all filled Him with strange thoughts. He had left yonder Temple forever, and as He sat, retired from the rest, His four principal

disciples—Peter, James, Andrew, and John—came to break His reverie, and speak with Him privately. They had heard with astonishment what He said when leaving the Temple, about the huge buildings being all thrown down.

“Master !” they said, “tell us when these things shall be, and what will be the sign that they are coming?” This was almost the same question as the Pharisees asked Him when He was leaving the Peræa, and He answered it in the same way. The disciples thought that the end of the world would be soon, and they wished to know the exact time when Jesus would come again, if He were killed ; but His answer was followed by such strange and difficult sayings that they could not understand Him.

“Take care,” He said, “that you are not led astray ; for many men shall come using My name, and saying that they are the Christ, and that the end is near, and they shall lead many wrong, but go not after them. If any man shall say the Christ is here, or there, do not believe him ; for false Christs shall come, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders in order if possible to lead even my chosen followers astray. Now I have told you before it cometh. If, therefore, they say to you that the Christ is in some lonely place, go not thither, or that He is in the inner room, do not believe it, for as the lightning in the sky is seen from the East to the West, so shall I be when I come.” His disciples were still hoping for an earthly Kingdom with rewards of riches and of power, and He went on to warn them that after His death they would not have peace, but would rather be persecuted.

“When you hear of wars,” He said, “be not afraid. Nation shall fight against nation, and there shall be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in different places, with terrors and signs from the skies ; but these will be only the beginning of troubles.” Then He told His disciples, who had now all gathered round Him, what would be done to them for following Him, saying, as He said to them in Galilee—

“But before all these things, men shall take hold on you and persecute you, giving you up to councils, churches, and

prisons ; you shall be beaten in churches, and they shall kill you, and you shall be hated by all nations for My sake, and before governors and kings you shall stand as My witnesses. When they lead you away and deliver you up, be not anxious in your hearts, nor think beforehand how you shall answer them, nor what you shall say, but speak whatever cometh into your minds at the time, for it is not you that speaketh, but the Spirit of God that speaketh in you. For I will give you words of wisdom which all your opponents shall not be able to resist nor overcome." Thus in all their troubles His Spirit would be with them ; but He again reminded them that they would find opposition in their own homes.

"You shall be given up even by your fathers, brothers, friends, and relations, and some of you shall be put to death. Then shall many go wrong, and give up one another, and hate one another, and because badness hath increased, the love of many shall grow cold ; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. By patience you shall win your souls. For the good tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven shall be told over the whole world for a message to all nations, and then shall the end come." He now came to speak of their question, the destruction of the Temple.

"When you shall see Jerusalem surrounded with soldiers, know that her ruin is near. Then let them that are in the low country of Judæa fly to the safe places of the mountains, and these that are in the city run out, and those that are in the country not go in. For then will be the days of punishment, when all the things that are written of Jerusalem shall happen. Pray that the flight from that city be not in Winter, neither on the Sabbath, when men travel only a little way ; for there shall be great distress, such as hath never been since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be. There shall be distress upon the land and wrath on the people, for they shall be slain with the sword, and taken away prisoners into other nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by strangers until the time of their occupation shall be fulfilled." Thus He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, which, when it did

come, was the most terrible destruction of a city that has ever been. Last of all, He told them of other things, the meaning of which it is useless for thee to attempt to understand, or even to guess at.

"There shall be signs in the sun, moon, and stars," He said ; "the sun shall grow dark, the moon shall not give light, the stars shall fall, and the powers of the skies shall be shaken. Upon the earth shall be distress of nations, and fear and doubt, because of the roaring and billows of the sea, men fainting with fear of the things about to come upon the world. Then shall they see Me coming in the clouds with power and great glory. And I will send out My angels with a trumpet of great sound, and they shall gather together My followers from the furthest parts of the earth to the furthest parts of Heaven. And when these things happen, look up and hold up your heads, because your deliverance is near."

His disciples had asked to know hidden things, and there, sitting under the whispering leaves, with the glory of the setting sun upon His face, Jesus told them mysteries. One thing was plain, that His death was not to be followed by His throne being set up in Jerusalem, and all nations being put under Him, as they still hoped. First the disciples themselves were to be beaten and slain, from cottage to palace, then Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and in time, after there had been many wars, and the whole earth was at peace, and the message of Heaven had been carried to all nations, the end would come. A strange, lurid phantasmagoria, incomprehensible, and without a key.

And thou, my child, wilt learn from the words of Jesus to His disciples, that if ever thou art called upon to speak in His name, not to prepare what thou art to say. If thou art to speak at all, God's Holy Spirit will give thoughts to thy mind and words to thy lips ; for it is idle to speak in thy own wisdom, without His Spirit teaching thee, and if thou hast the Spirit of Jesus thou hast all.

LEARN OF THE FIG TREE.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Jesus sat at sundown on the Mount of Olives with His disciples looking across at the beautiful Temple, and while they were still amazed and wondering at the strange things which they had heard from Him, He told them some more short, simple stories. It was the time of year when the slopes of Olivet were at their freshest, in garden, field, and grove, and where they sat they were surrounded by mulberry, olive, fig, oak, cypress, pine, myrtle, and cedar trees, of all tints of leafage, from dark green to golden yellow, some in full leaf, some only bursting their buds ; and on the sunny slopes below, were the king's gardens brilliant with flowers.

"Look at the fig tree," Jesus said, "and all the trees, and from the fig tree learn her story. Her branch has now become tender, and her buds are putting forth green leaves. When the trees put out their tender leaves, you can see it for yourselves and know that Summer is near." The disciples were men from the country, who knew that one of the surest signs of Summer is when green leaves are upon the tree." "So," Jesus continued, "when you see these things happening of which I have told you, know that the end is near, even at the door, for truly I say to you that there are men living now who will not be dead before these things will have happened. The earth and skies shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not even the angels in Heaven, but God only. Watch, therefore, for you know not when your Lord shall come."

He told them also another short story, one of warning to them to live good lives, so that the dread hour of death, of which none knoweth the time, should not find them unprepared; for to each man death is the coming of Jesus, and the passing away of earth and sky.

"Be careful," Jesus said. "Watch and pray, for you do not know the time nor the day when God will come. Beware, lest your hearts be taken up with feasting and drink-

ing and the things of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly, catching you as in a snare; for so it shall be to all people. But watch always, and pray that you may escape these things, and stand before Me. Be, then, like the faithful and wise servant whom his master put in charge of his whole house, to give the other servants their food at proper times? Blessed is he if his master, when he cometh, shall find him doing so, for he will give him charge over all that he hath.

“It is,” He continued, “as if a master were to leave his house and go away on a journey into another country, giving power to his servants, and to each one his work to do, and telling the door-keeper to watch. Watch, therefore,” Jesus added earnestly to His listening disciples—“for you do not know when the Master shall come, perhaps at evening, or midnight, or when the cock crows at dawn, or in the bright morning. What if He should come suddenly and find you sleeping? What I say to you, My disciples, I say to all men, Watch!” He had told them before, that His death would be like a master going away upon a journey to return again, and that they must teach and work as He had taught them to do during the years that He had lived with them; and now, four days before His death, He repeated it, with warnings more solemn than ever.

And thou, my child, mayest wonder what thou art to watch for. Is it for wars, famines, dark miseries, sieges of Jerusalem, falling stars, or what? Thou needst trouble thyself with none of these things, but thou must watch and pray and keep thy heart pure, a little temple of Heaven in which dwelleth God’s Holy Spirit, so that when death cometh it may be to thee a white-robed angel, sent to take thee to that Heaven beyond of which Jesus hath told thee so much.

He leadeth me, Oh happy thought !
And words with heavenly comfort fraught,
Where’er I am, whate’er I be,
By His own hand He leadeth me.

THE TEN BRIDESMAIDS.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

As Jesus sat on Olivet, looking over the deep ravines of crag, cliff, and tree that surrounded the city of Jerusalem, whose walls cast gloomy shadows into the deep Kedron vale, and over on the Mount, He told His disciples another story with a meaning, and it was about ten young girls who were bridesmaids. In that country it was the custom for the bride to ask a number of her young friends to be her maids at the wedding, just as they do in England; but bridesmaids got much more to do there. It was part of their duty to watch in the bride's house, and be ready to go out dressed in gay white dresses, with their hair floating loose on their shoulders, and wreathed with flowers, to welcome the bridegroom, and dance before him, as they brought him into the house, with music of pipes and cymbals, praising the bride, their young companion, in songs, and telling him how lovely she was. If he came at night, they had to go out all the same, each carrying a pole with a little lamp hanging from it, to light the way. It was common for ten of the bride's young companions to do this, and as she was usually about fifteen years old, her bridesmaids would be younger still. It was of this pretty joyous custom which Jesus spoke in His story.

The coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, He said, is like ten young bridesmaids, who took their lighted lamps and went out at night to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. Now the five foolish maidens took no oil with them when they took their lamps, but the wise ones took oil in bottles along with their lamps. They had gone out a good way upon the road to meet the bridegroom, and as he did not come, they went into a house to wait for him, but he was long in coming, and it grew very late, and while they waited the young bridesmaids fell fast asleep, leaving their lamps still burn-

ing. But at midnight, some one came in from the road crying—

“The bridegroom cometh ! Come out to meet him.” He had heard the voices of the young men in the distance who were bringing the bridegroom, and perhaps had seen their lighted torches. Then all the bridesmaids rose in haste, and began to trim their lamps, pricking up the wicks, and pouring in oil, to make the flame burn brightly.

“Give us some of your oil,” the foolish maidens said to the wise ones, “for our lamps have gone out, and we have no oil to pour into them ?” But the wise maidens replied—

“Perhaps there will not be enough for both of us. Go rather to the people that sell oil and buy some for yourselves.” Then the five foolish maidens went out to find some one who would sell them oil ; and while they were away, the bridegroom came, and they were not there to meet him. But the five wise maidens met him with their lamps burning brightly, and danced before him, and lighted the way to the bride’s house, and went in with him to the wedding supper, and the door was shut. And all was light and joy, for the door was the door of Heaven, all glittering within, but dark without.

After a time, the five foolish bridesmaids, having got oil, lit their lamps, and hurried on to overtake the others ; with no dance or song, but with sinking hearts, which are so heavy for young people to bear. They were lonely and afraid, in the darkness which pressed around them and which their small lamps could not dispel, and when they found the door of the bride’s house, it was shut, dark, and gloomy, for all were in but they ; and pressing against it in terror, they cried—

“Lord ! Lord ! open to us !” But the answer that came from within was from the bridegroom—

“Truly I say to you, I do not know you.” And the five foolish maidens had to go away into the darkness. Thus ended the story of the ten bridesmaids, and Jesus added these warning words to His disciples, “Watch, therefore, for you know not the time when you shall be called.”

Jesus also told the disciples another story about the Kingdom of Heaven as they sat on the hillside that evening, called "*The Silver Talents*," but as it is almost word for word the same as the story of "*The Pounds*," which He told in Zacchæus's house at Jericho less than a week before, I will not give thee it all over again. It was told to impress more and more upon His disciples that although He was going away, they were to work with the power which He had given them, like faithful servants for an absent master in the Kingdom which He had spread among men. In this story He said the master lent one servant five silver talents, another two, and another one, according as they were clever or not. Now a silver talent was worth about two hundred English pounds. And the first two servants traded with the money and had doubled it by the time the master came back, but the third servant buried his silver talent in the ground, and did nothing. To the good servants, on his return home, the master said, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," but he ordered the lazy, idle servant to be punished, in the same way as the bad servant in the story of the pounds. But the word "talent" has now got to have a higher meaning than money. We have all talents. Thy talents are, all the advantages and powers which thou dost possess of mind and heart and body, as well as wealth and position. These things are the talents which God has entrusted to thee to use in doing good all the days of thy life.

And thou, my child, wilt remember that there are two ways of doing wrong, one way is by trying to do it, and the other is by being thoughtless and careless ; the one is wickedness, the other foolishness. These foolish young maidens did not think of oil. If they had been at all anxious about what they were doing, they certainly would have taken enough ; but they were careless ; pleased more with twining flowers in their hair. Remember, then, that the boy who kills a sparrow with a stone, may say he did not *think* he would hit it, but the bird is dead, and nothing can make it alive again.

HUNGRY, AND YOU FED ME.

JERUSALEM, TUESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It was now almost sundown, which is followed very quickly by darkness in that country. The evening skies in the West were barred with crimson, rose, and saffron, through which the sun darted level rays of gold at the pinnacles of the Holy place, while the shadows cast by the Temple crept swiftly to the top of Olivet. Jesus could not remain any longer ; and we now come to His last story, and of all the strange and wonderful things which He told the disciples there, this story about Heaven after death, and the vision of Judgment, is the strangest and most difficult to understand. In it He spoke of sitting upon a throne surrounded by angels, with all the people who have ever lived standing before Him. He had already told the disciples to use their powers in doing good, and to watch and pray, and now He spoke of His coming again.

“When I shall come in My glory,” He said, “with all the angels of Heaven, then shall I sit upon a throne of glory, and before Me shall be gathered all the people of the world, and I will separate them one from another as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, and put the good people on My right hand, and the bad people on My left. Then shall I, the King of Heaven, say to them on My right hand—

“‘Come, you blessed of My Father, enter the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For *I was hungry, and you gave Me food ; thirsty, and you gave Me water ; a stranger, and you took Me in ; naked, and you clothed Me ; sick, and in prison, and you visited Me.*’” Now, all truly kind things which good people do, are done without hope of praise or reward, only through kindness ; and Jesus went on to say that the good people would reply to Him in astonishment, saying—

“‘Lord ! when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee ? or thirsty, and gave Thee water ? or a stranger, and took Thee into

our homes? or naked, and clothed Thee? or sick or in prison, and came to Thee?" Comparatively few of the good people of the world saw Jesus as He went about in that far-distant country. And Jesus continued—

"Then I, the King, will answer these righteous ones, and say, 'Because you did it to one of the least of My followers, it is as though you did it to Me.'" Thus He showed that to be kind to one of His followers, is like being kind to Him. And He went on to tell them that He would turn to the people on His left hand, who had no such happy memories, and say—

"'Go away from Me, you bad people, into the punishment which is prepared for the spirit of evil and his followers; for I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; thirsty, and you gave Me no water; a stranger, and you did not take Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick and in prison, and you did not come to Me.'" These are woeful words; and Jesus told His disciples what the answer would be.

"'Lord!' they would say, 'when did we see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not help Thee?'" But the same reply which made the good people happy would make the bad people miserable.

"'Truly, I say, that because you did not do it to one of the least of these My followers, you did it not to Me.'" And indeed, there are many people who saw Jesus as He walked about in Galilee, spreading His Kingdom among men, foot-sore, thirsty, hungry, and heard Him speak, and many who have not seen Him, have heard His voice whispering to them, and have read of Him, but have not done one kind thing for His sake. His story seemed to open the door of Heaven to His disciples as He spoke, but He shut the scene with those awful words which we shall never understand in this world. "And the bad shall go away into never ending punishment, and the good into Heaven."

This is the last of His marvellous sayings upon Olivet. The red sun had sunk behind the distant hills, and the lights

of the city were twinkling forth across the valley, as the shadows of night falling into the gulf of the Kedron, grew darker still, where in the deeper distance the vales of Kedron and Hinnom mingled in rugged gloom—a scene of black rocks and night shadows. And the birds were hushed as He walked for the last time, after His long and tiring day, over the shoulder of the hill to Bethany's cottage among the green fig trees. And as they went, their pathway lighted by the shadowy moon, Jesus told the disciples again in a few simple words that His death was near.

"You know," He said, "that in two days is the Festival of the Passover, and I shall be given up to be crucified." "Crucified!" each would exclaim in a whisper. Our loving Master, so young, so kind, Crucified! These hands, these feet, nailed to a coarse wooden cross! They could not bring themselves to believe that the hatred of His enemies would go so far, for that was how the very worst criminals in the land were put to death. But Jesus knew that His enemies would mete out to Him the most cruel death.

While Jesus rested with His disciples on Olivet that afternoon, a very different kind of meeting was being held in Jerusalem. After the failures of the day, as soon as the Temple services were over, Caiaphas, the Chief Priest, called together the priests and elders to meet him in his palace on Mount Zion, the high and fashionable part of the town, there to consider what should be done regarding Jesus. Those who had been defeated that day in the controversies in the Temple, told it all over again to the others, and the question was, How long was this to continue? When would it be safe for them to have Jesus taken a prisoner and put to death, as they had resolved so long ago to do? After some talk, it was settled that, seeing the people were so much on His side, they should leave Him alone for one week more, until the Festival was over, and His friends the exciteable Galileans had left the city for their distant homes. Then they would have Him taken a prisoner, but not by force openly, for fear of the people rescuing Him, but taken in some quiet place.

And so they went home, not intending to do anything for eight days.

Thou wilt not be able to understand the full meaning of this strange story, but part of it thou canst easily grasp. As a little follower of Jesus, thou art to be kind to all people in distress, whether hungry, sick, or naked. Do to them as thou wouldst that they should do to thee if thou wert in the same sad state ; and if thou canst not do much, thou canst always think and speak kindly of them, and thou wilt do so for the sake of Jesus, whose Spirit is Love and Gentleness.

SHE DID WHAT SHE COULD.

BETHANY, WEDNESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Jesus did not go to the Temple on Wednesday, but remained quietly with His friends in Bethany. The priests blew their silver trumpets, and flung open the brazen gates in the morning, and cast sweet incense on the altar fire in the Holy place, and the people came in crowds seeking Jesus, but He was not there. He was behind the green hill of Olivet, perhaps walking in the fields with His mother, who had come up from Galilee, and telling her that soon He would be killed. And people who missed Him from the Temple came over the hill and found Him in Bethany, and told Him of the meeting of priests in the palace the night before ; for He had friends among the chief men. Thus He and His disciples heard that the priests wished to have Him taken secretly in a way that would not rouse the people.

That evening a supper was given to Jesus by His friends at Bethany, in the house of one called Simon. Martha helped to prepare it, but Mary watched Jesus with loving eyes, and spent much of her time in listening to His words. Some days before, she had formed a plan, and was waiting to carry it out. Like Mary Magdalene, she wondered what she could do to show her love for Him. She knew that, as a sign of honour to kings and great persons, it was a usual thing to pour sweet

smelling oil upon their heads before the people, and she resolved that this was how she would show her love for Jesus. Taking money, she went into Jerusalem to a shop where sweet perfumes were sold, and bought a flask of the rarest Indian ointment she could get, made from the spikenard plant that grows high upon mountains, and the flask in which it was sealed was of thin shining alabaster, brittle and white as snow. The price of this flask of precious perfume was about ten pounds of our money, for it contained about a pound weight of rich perfume ; and she carried it home secretly, and hid it.

The table was spread for the supper, and the guests had taken their places on the low couches round it, with Lazarus there also, and while Martha served, Mary stood back watching Jesus. Soon something in the conversation told her that now was the time to do what she intended. Leaving her place, she went round the table to where Jesus was, and taking the white alabaster flask from the folds of her dress, and bending down behind Him, she broke the slender flask between her hands, and poured the precious perfume upon His head, and then going to His feet with the dripping flask, she poured what was left of the perfume upon His feet ; and soon the whole house was filled with the rich smell of the spikenard. But that was not all, for kneeling down, she loosed her bright hair and wiped His feet with her hair, as Mary Magdalene had done ; and, drawing back, she stood with blushing cheeks behind Him, but not afraid, for she was among her own friends. Yet the guests thought it strange that the youthful Mary should do this ; pouring out costly perfume so lavishly. And there was one who was angry, when He saw the precious spikenard running upon the floor and lost.

“Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” grumbled Judas Iscariot, as he frowned angrily at Mary. He was treasurer for the disciples, and wished that the money had been given into his care, for he loved money, and was not honest. And

some of the guests thought Judas spoke sensibly in chiding Mary for this apparent waste, and they said to her—

“For what purpose hath this waste of ointment been made?” And others also spoke harshly to her as she stood, now trembling and afraid, with her tearful eyes looking to Jesus. She had meant to do a good thing, but they said she had done wrong. What would *He* say?

“Let her alone,” said Jesus sternly to Judas, in a tone which showed him that He knew how mean was the motive for his harsh words to Mary. “She hath done a good thing to Me,” He continued. “The poor you have always with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good, but Me you shall not always have.” Then looking from the frowning Judas to the blushing maiden, He said, “*She hath done what she could.* She hath anointed Me, preparing Me beforehand, for burial.” And turning to the rest, He said these words, which filled Mary with wonder and astonishment, “I say truly, that wherever My teaching is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman hath done to-day shall be spoken about in memory of her.” This was the second time that Jesus had praised the gentle Mary, and, as the supper went on, her young heart went out to Him with ever increasing love and gratitude.

Turn thou, my child, from the gloomy face of Judas to the gentle maiden, who did what she could for Jesus. And yet, until He spoke to Mary, the tongues of all the others said she had done wrong. Thou wilt often find thy best deeds misinterpreted and misunderstood by others, but let not that discourage thee, if thou hast done thy best, Jesus will speak to thee and comfort thee, as He did Mary.

THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER.

JERUSALEM, WEDNESDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

All were now glad, at the supper in Lazarus's house, that Mary had done such a good thing with her white flask of perfume, all save one, whose anger was turned from her to Jesus,

by what Jesus had said to him. Judas had been rebuked, and rebuked before all who were there, and as he sat frowning at that supper table he thought of the last few years. All his life as a disciple passed before him. With the other disciples, he had loved and admired Jesus, and had expected to be rewarded with honours and money for following Him. Like them, he had been disappointed and grieved when Jesus said that they would get no rewards in this world, but rather punishments; and he would not believe it. He was made treasurer for the disciples, but so little money came in, that it was hardly worth the trouble of keeping. And now, when he had grumbled at a young girl for wasting a large sum of money that might have gone into his empty purse, Jesus had rebuked him, as if they did not need money, while they were more like beggars than followers of a coming King. Also Jesus kept telling them, over and over again, that He would soon die, and certainly the priests seemed bent upon taking Him a prisoner. Judas had not got what he wanted in following Jesus. The whole thing was a great disappointment to him, and evidently, like many other popular movements, it was soon coming to an end, when each one would have to look out for himself. He had heard that *the priests wished to take Jesus secretly*, and would likely give money to any one who helped them. He would tell them how to do it, and if Jesus were indeed the Christ, he would thus force Him to exert His great power and scatter His enemies, and if Jesus did not do so, but let the priests take Him, then He could not be the Christ, and it was time that everybody knew it. Besides, had Jesus not rebuked him before them all for greed—greed, and He so poor! And Judas resolved, for better for worse, to get Jesus into the power of His enemies.

And that evening he stole out unseen from the shadows of Bethany, and hurried over the familiar path to Jerusalem, with his head bent in dogged thought, the great white moon looming behind him. Once within the city gate, he

went quickly to the Temple, and asked to see the captain of the Temple guard, and by him he was taken before the chief priests and Temple rulers that were there, and to them he told his strange errand of treachery, an errand fitly told in secret and at night. That he was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus ; that Jesus whom they had missed from the Temple that day was staying quietly at Bethany ; and that he, Judas, had come secretly over the hill to offer to tell them how they might capture Him quickly and quietly. The priests looked closely at his grim face, and remembered having seen him among the disciples, and were glad, and talked eagerly with him as to how Jesus could be best taken. Judas told them, and they thought they had arranged it all with him, when—

“What will you give me if I deliver Him up to you?” Judas asked grimly, and the priests were taken aback, and talked vaguely of rewarding him well. But no ! it was Jew against Jew, and Judas would promise nothing until they weighed him out there and then thirty pieces of silver from the Temple money-box, with perhaps more if the plan succeeded. Now thirty pieces of silver was the common price of a slave, and Judas sold Jesus, his Master, for that. And as he counted the silver over into his purse, he promised to come and tell the priests whenever Jesus was in a place where He might be surprised and taken a prisoner with no people near. And they promised to be ready with soldiers.

With the money in his pocket, Judas left the Temple, and walked back to Bethany, feeling perhaps light-hearted as he went, for he had made his peace with the priests, and was now an important man to them, and the money made up a little for what he had lost by Mary at the supper. As for Jesus and his old companions the disciples, now that he had quite broken away and turned against them, he thought how poor, foolish, and to be despised they were, for Jesus, who could do so much, would do nothing to make them rich. And as for what the priests would do to Jesus when they got Him, that was their business. But they could not do much, he thought,

for Jesus had done no wrong against the state or any man, They might perhaps scourge Him and let Him go again. On the other hand, perhaps Jesus would declare His great Kingdom of power, and defeat them all, and then he, Judas, would have brought it about. Thus, after three years of cramped and simulative goodness, Judas found it easy, indeed pleasant, to be openly bad. And while it was still dark, he crept back to the village of Bethany and got quietly into the house where he lodged. From that time he watched and planned how he could let the priests know when Jesus could be safely taken a prisoner.

And thou wilt remember the wickedness and treachery of Judas in what he did. We wonder how he could do it, after living day after day for years with such a gentle and loving Friend, and thou wilt remember that however close thy companionship may be with Jesus, thou must ever be on thy guard against the temptings of the spirit of evil.

PREPARING THE PASSOVER SUPPER.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Thursday morning dawned calmly over Bethany, with a rose blush upon the hills of Moab, and sun-gold upon the clouds. It was the last day of His freedom, and again Jesus remained quietly at Bethany with His friends. His work in the Temple was over. He walked and talked with those who loved Him, while all day long the dark lurking eyes of Judas watched his Master's movements for the opportunity when he might run and tell the priests where Jesus could be safely taken.

It was the First day of the great Festival, when all the people were busy with preparations for the joyful Passover supper of which every man, woman, and child, of the many thousands who had come to Jerusalem, would partake in families, and in groups of friends. That day was called the first day of Unleavened Bread, for all leaven had been put away from their houses the night before, searching for it with candles; and no leaven might be used for eight days. In the morning,

intending again to eat the Passover supper with His disciples, as He had done for the last three years, Jesus said to Peter and John—

“Go and make ready the Passover supper that we may eat it together.” For a lamb had to be brought from the Temple, and things bought, and it would take them all day to prepare it.

“Where dost thou wish that we should make ready the supper?” they replied, thinking Jesus would have it in some house in Bethany; but they would need to go to Jerusalem for the lamb all the same.

“When you go into the city,” said Jesus, “you will meet a man carrying a pitcher of water. Follow him to the house whither he goeth, and when he entereth in, say to the owner of the house, ‘Jesus saith to thee that His time is near, and He wisheth to keep the Passover at thy house, show us the room where He may eat it with His disciples.’ And the man will himself show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready, there make ready the supper for us.” The disciples then saw that He wished to have the Passover supper in Jerusalem and not at Bethany; but none of them knew where, so that Judas could not tell in what house it would be.

Peter and John then went away to Jerusalem, and as they entered the city gate they saw a man carrying a pitcher, and followed him until he went into a house, and they went in after him, and gave his master their message; and, as Jesus had said, he received them gladly, being friendly to Jesus, and took them by an outside stone stair up to his best room, which was large and ready furnished for a supper to be held there that night, with mats upon the floor, and a low table and couches round it, large enough for thirteen people. Then Peter and John got earthenware jugs for water, and cups for wine, and put them upon the table, and large jars of water and basins and towels for washing feet at the door; and going out, they bought unleavened cakes of bread, and bitter herbs, lettuce, endive, horehound, and salt, vinegar, oil, dates, raisins, apples, nuts, and red wine. The salt and the bitter herbs and

cakes of bread were put into dishes, and placed upon the table; and from the dates, raisins, apples, nuts, crushed and mixed with salt and vinegar into a stiff paste, they made a bowl of what was called "Charoseth," to remind them of the clay with which their forefathers made bricks in Egypt long ago, and it was also put upon the table with the water and the wine. Then the hanging lamps were filled with oil, and trimmed, and all was ready for the Supper, excepting the lamb.

John and Peter went out again and bought a little lamb of one year old, examining it to see that it had no fault, and about three o'clock they carried it up to the Temple, among thousands of others, for every family had to have a lamb killed in the Temple. In the course of the afternoon they took their lamb into the Priests' Court, and there, when the gates were shut, at the sound of silver trumpets, with hundreds more, they killed their lamb and skinned and prepared it for roasting, giving a part to the priests who were helping them, and carried it away, taking care to break none of the bones. Then they roasted it whole, upon a pomegranate stick, either in a hole in the ground or in an oven, which it was not allowed to touch. It was evening, therefore, before they had everything ready for the joyful supper, which was so important to all Jews, for it reminded them of the time, long, long ago, when their forefathers ate the same kind of supper in Egypt, on the night when the angel of death passed over the land, sparing all the houses whose doors had been marked on the sides with the blood of the little lamb, and entering all those which were not so marked.

The sun was setting behind the great city of Jerusalem when Jesus, with His ten disciples, came again, and for the last time, over by the hill path from Bethany. The streets were thronged with people, all in gay holiday clothes, the houses brightly lighted up, and they were met by John and Peter and taken to the friend's house, where everything was ready, and where Jesus ate the last meal which He took on earth, and which has ever since been called "The last supper."

And thou wilt remember that this meal which Jesus took was the great Jewish Passover supper, which He had often taken before in His father's house, or with His disciples, and of which every Jewish family ate all on the same night ; for it is well for thy right understanding of all that Jesus did and said at it, that thou shouldst remember how He and His disciples came to take supper together in that particular way.

THE LAST SUPPER.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Going up by the outside stone stair of the friend's house in the narrow street of Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples, entered the large upper room where the supper table was spread, and the supper ready, each one taking off his sandals and washing his feet as he went in. They were all dressed in their best holiday clothes, and the room was brightly lighted with the hanging lamps, for the Passover supper was ordered to be held as a joyful feast in memory of God's goodness to His own people. In Egypt they had first eaten this supper standing, with long sticks in their hands, and their shoes on, ready for a journey ; but now they were commanded to eat it lying upon thick mats and soft cushions, in their best clothes, as a sign of rest, prosperity, and gladness.

When the first three stars appeared in the sky, they heard the priests' silver trumpets ringing out from the Temple the signal for the supper to begin all over the city. On the table, which was partly covered with a white cloth, was the bread, wine, water, and herbs, the other things being on a small side table. But, strange and sad to say, when the disciples came to take their places on the couches, they began to quarrel, just as the Pharisees had done, about who was greatest and who should have the highest seat. Jesus noticed them quarelling, but said nothing. When they were all in their places, they were arranged round three sides of the table, lying on their left sides, with their left elbows upon the

table, and their right hands free to take things. Jesus lay at the right hand end, looking up the table, and John lay next in front of Him, and so on all round, Judas being near Jesus, and Peter at the foot of the table, right across from Jesus and John, all with their outer cloaks off, and wearing tunics of striped colours bound with a sash, and kerchiefs on their heads, red, purple, white, green or yellow—all bright and cheerful. Being so high above the street, when the door was shut, no one could see in or hear what was being said, and Jesus was well pleased with the arrangements that Peter and John had made, and was very glad that they should all take this joyful supper together once more, and He said to His disciples—

“With a great wish I have desired to eat this Passover supper with you before I suffer; for I tell you I will not eat it again until it be fulfilled in Heaven.”

Now this supper had been kept in the same way for hundreds of years, by drinking cups of wine and water mixed, and eating unleavened cakes, herbs, and roast lamb. Blessings and thanks were spoken, and psalms sung, while the head one at the table, usually the father, explained what all the different things meant, and went over the history of the Jews from the time when they came out of Egypt. The first thing done was to fill a large cup with one part of red wine and two of water, over which Jesus would say the usual double thanks for the wine and for the return of the Passover day, and tasting it, He would hand it to the others, who would pass it round the table, all drinking from the cup.

Then it was usual for the father to rise from the table and wash his hands, and Jesus rose, and going over to the place where the red clay basins and jugs of water stood, He took off His white tunic, leaving on only His thin under dress, and taking a large towel, tied it round His waist, His arms being bare. From one of the jars He filled a red basin with water, and carrying it over to the couches, He knelt down and began to wash John's feet, and dry them with the towel, while the others looked on in astonishment. He then went to the next disciple and did the same to him, and passed on to the next,

taking them in their order as they lay round the table. Wash their feet ! A thing which only slaves did ! There was now no more talk of who was greatest, for here was the greatest of them all, doing a slave's work. But Peter looked on with growing feelings of shame and indignation, as he saw the other disciples allowing their dear young Master to do this thing for them ; and when Jesus came at last to him, as though reminding Jesus of His position, he exclaimed—

“Master, wouldst *Thou* wash *my* feet?” And he held his feet away.

“Thou dost not understand why I do this,” Jesus said quietly, “but thou shalt know afterwards.” But Peter was not satisfied, and answered hastily—

“Thou shalt never wash my feet.” He believed that nothing could persuade him to allow it ; but Jesus looked at him and said in tones which thrilled the heart of His old disciple—

“If I do not wash thee, thou shalt have no share with Me.”

“Master !” exclaimed Peter, whose hasty temper leapt at once into the opposite extreme, “wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my face,” which was the customary washing before food. Peter thought he could not be washed too much now ; but Jesus explained that the extent of washing made no difference, saying—

“He that I bathe, needeth only to have his feet washed, and then he will be all clean,” and added these words, which must have startled Judas, “And you are clean, but not every one.” For Jesus knew what Judas had done. He had been told that Judas had made offers to the priests to betray Him. Most likely He was told by a message from the same men who warned Him before that the council had resolved to take Him a prisoner and kill Him ; but He did not tell His disciples, nor did He intend this time to fly from Jerusalem. He had made up His mind to die ; but Judas did not know that He knew of his villainy. Having washed all their feet, as they rested like princes on their soft cushions, Jesus put

back the basin and towel, and putting on His white tunic, took His place at the head of the table again.

The next thing at such a Supper, was for Jesus to take some of the lettuce and other herbs and dip them in the salt and vinegar and eat a little, giving thanks, and then to hand some to the disciple next Him at the table, reminding them all as He did so, that the herbs and vinegar were in memory of the bitter slavery in Egypt; and after that, to break a cake of the bread. The second cup of wine and water would then be filled and placed on the table, while Jesus reminded them briefly of how the first Passover supper was held, long ago, and why they now killed and ate a lamb, the lamb being then put upon the table before them, to remind them that God had spared the blood-sprinkled houses in Egypt, and that their forefathers ate of roasted lamb on the night before they left Egypt forever.

“Do you know the meaning of what I have done for you,” Jesus said, referring to the washing of their feet. “You call Me Master and Lord, and you are right, for I am your Master and your Lord. If I then, the Head and Master of you all, have washed all your feet, you ought also to wash one another’s feet. For I have shown you an example that you should do to each other as I have done to you. Whoever is greatest among you I wish him to become as the youngest, and he that is chief among you to be like a servant, for among you I am as if I were a servant.” No plainer lesson could have been given to the disciples, never again to dispute about who was greatest, and telling them of rewards, Jesus continued—

“You are the men who have remained with Me in My temptations, and I shall give you a Kingdom, just as God hath given a Kingdom to Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom; and you shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. A servant is not greater than his Master, nor a disciple who is sent with a message greater than His teacher who sent him. If you understand these things and do them you shall be blessed.” Then, thinking of Judas, who lay listening with the rest, Jesus said, “I do not speak

of you all. I know whom I have chosen ; but it is as King David wrote in the 41st Psalm—

“ ‘Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I have trusted.

“ ‘Which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.’

I tell you of this *now*, before it happeneth,” referring still to Judas, “so that when it cometh, you may believe that I am the Christ. Truly, whoever receiveth those whom I send, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth God.”

And thou, my child, wilt learn from Peter’s words, the mistake of turning quickly from one thing to another without thinking, for both in refusing, and in asking to be washed, Peter was wrong ; but be thou calm and clear, and make sure that it is Jesus who guideth thee, and then do His will quietly, firmly, and with all thy might.

JUDAS GOES OUT

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34

The night was dark, for the moon had not yet risen over the city ; but the upper room in which Jesus and the disciples were met was cheerfully lighted. Having explained what He meant by washing the disciples’ feet at the commencement of the night, Jesus went on with the rest of the supper. I cannot tell thee what He said as He explained the different things that were done, but this is what was usually done at such a supper, and I will tell thee what Jesus said later on. After reminding them why the supper was held, and what the different things on the table meant,—the “bitter herbs,” their fathers’ bitter lives in Egypt ; the “unleavened bread,” the haste with which they escaped from Egypt ; and the “Charoseth,” the clay with which they toiled in Egypt,—it was usual to sing the 113th and 114th Psalms of King David, called the first part of the joyful Hallel, in which are these words—

“When Israel went forth out of Egypt,

“The house of Jacob from a people of strange language ;

**“The mountains skipped like rams,
And the little hills like young sheep.”**

A short prayer was then said, and the second cup of wine and water drunk, and then they all rose and washed their hands. On returning to the table more brief thanks were given, and the bread-cakes were broken, and putting some herbs and roast lamb between two pieces of cake, and dipping it in the bowl of “Charoseth,” a piece was handed to each by the father at the table, and this was the “sop” which Jesus gave to Judas. The general eating of roast lamb, bread and herbs was then begun, while the third cup of wine and water was filled and placed upon the table. All then rose and washed their hands again, for they ate the food with their fingers. On returning to their places, they drank of the third cup, which was the principal one, and was followed by a blessing. Then came the fourth and last wine cup, and the singing of the rest of the joyful Hallel, the 115th, 116th, 117th, and 118th Psalms of King David, in which are these words—

“I love the Lord, because He hath heard

“My voice and my supplication.

“Oh, give thanks unto the Lord ; for He is good,

“For His mercy endureth for ever.”

A blessing of praise came last of all, and the joyful Passover supper was over for another year.

Having told thee what was always done, let us now return to what Jesus said at this supper. While it was usual for the father at the table to speak a great deal about what took place, Jesus spoke much, but not about the supper so much as about what would soon happen to Himself and to His disciples. Before the time came to eat of the roast lamb, which was the principal thing at the supper, knowing that Judas was false to them all, and wishing he would go away and leave them, for He had to except him from what He said, Jesus spoke these words in a quiet voice—

“The hand of the man who shall betray Me is with Mine on this table. I shall be betrayed, but woe to the man who doeth it.” This was a warning enough to Judas, who lay with

his left arm resting on the table, but he took no notice of it. Perhaps he did not think Jesus knew of his treachery, perhaps he did not care, at any rate he determined to appear innocent, and took part with the other disciples in asking each other in whispers, who could possibly be so wicked as do such a thing, when at that very moment he had the silver pieces of the priests in his pocket. He was determined to stay and hear all he could.

Jesus, who had been cheerful with the others, now became troubled and anxious in spirit. He wished Judas to go. He had washed his feet with the rest. Would he never go? And the disciples were concerned to see from the silence of their gentle young Master that He was grieved. After a pause, He said again—

“I say truly that one of you shall betray Me.” This was plainer still ; but Judas did not move or show a sign of guilt, as the disciples looked in each others’ faces in wonder to see who looked like the one that would do such a cruel thing.

“One of you that eateth with Me shall betray Me,” Jesus said again, and the disciples were deeply grieved to hear Him say so again, and each one began to be afraid of himself, and to ask Him one after another—

“Lord, is it I? Lord, is it I?” And Judas asked Him among the rest, for not to have done so would have been suspicious.

“It is one of My twelve disciples,” Jesus replied. “One who hath dipped his hand with Me in this bowl of Charoseth. I go, as it is written of Me, but woe to the man by whom I am betrayed. It were better for him if he had never been born.” These are words which only a cruel hypocrite could hear unmoved, but Judas heard them and said not a word. Now John, who was much loved by Jesus, and who lay next Him at the table, by leaning back could rest his head on Jesus’ breast, and this he often did in the course of the supper, talking quietly to Jesus his cousin ; and Peter, who sat across the table, and was impatient of this suspense, believing that

John must know who Jesus meant should betray Him, beckoned to him across the table, and said—

“Of whom doth He speak?” But John did not know, and made a sign to Peter. After a little, John, leaning back, asked Jesus quietly—

“Who is it?” Jesus did not care to say the name of Judas. Without telling the others, He had let Judas know that He knew of his treachery. Still Judas showed no signs of going. But leave them he must, for the supper could not go on with him there.

“He is the one,” answered Jesus, loud enough for them all to hear, “for whom I shall dip a sop of bread, and give it to him.” And putting some herbs between bread, He dipped it in the bowl of “Charoseth,” and gave it to Judas.

“Is it I, Master?” Judas exclaimed, with a pretence of surprise as he took the piece. His respect for Jesus having fallen so low that he thought he could turn Him off with sham astonishment. But Jesus wished no more hypocrisy, and since He had had to point Judas out before them all, He replied plainly—

“Yes, as thou hast said.” And now the spirit of evil against Jesus rose stronger than ever in the breast of Judas. All were looking at him now as he sat revealed, the traitor among the twelve. But they did not know that he had *already betrayed Jesus*, and even yet intended to stay and hear more; but the clear dark eyes of Jesus were on him as he sat irresolute.

“*What thou intendest to do, do quickly,*” Jesus said, speaking to Judas in a tone which was an order to leave the room, and it smote the note in his mind like a secret message. “That I will,” Judas thought fiercely, as without a word he rose with flushed face from the table, and hastily putting on his sandals and cloak, stumbled out with dazzled eyes from the lighted room into the dark night, a deserter. Had Peter known for what purpose Judas was going out, he might not have let the traitor go so easily. None but Jesus knew that Judas had already been to the priests; some thinking that he

had gone out to buy something, while others thought that he had gone to give money to some poor people.

In open rebellion, wrapping his thick cloak round him, and keeping in the shadow of the houses, Judas walked down the street, away from his Passover Supper, away from Jesus, away from them all! feeling more and more angry with Jesus and with all His works. He had been discovered, pointed out, bid go, expelled, before his plans were complete. "Better he had never been born, indeed!" He would see about that! he would not thus be defeated. That very night, while the people of the city were within doors feasting, he would watch Jesus as He left that supper-room, and have Him taken a prisoner with soldiers as He went over the lonely hill to Bethany. All the disappointed hopes, the rebukes, the fancied wrongs which Judas believed had been heaped upon him, ending in that night's banishment from the great Supper, thronged and crowded in his darkened mind, and, as sure as yonder moon shone in the skies, he would be revenged. He would go at once to the Temple and warn the priests to be ready to capture Jesus that night, perhaps to take the disciples also.

And thou, my child, wilt remember from this sad story how the gentle words of Jesus only stirred up greater hatred in Judas; and wilt guard thy sweet spirit from the passion of hate, which turns all the goodness of the person hated, into greater cause for hating, just as a twisted mirror makes the fairest face seem ugly. Ruled by evil, the sole passion of Judas was to bring punishment upon Jesus for His goodness, and upon all who were like Him.

LITTLE CHILDREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

The disciples heard the footsteps of Judas going down the outside stair of the house, and dying away in the street below. They did not know why he had gone, but somehow the trouble

that had been upon their young Master seemed to depart with Judas. He became cheerful again, and they soon forgot about the absent traitor. Jesus felt that the circle of His friends was now drawn closer. There was no longer the spy, with gloom in his dusky face, watching and listening to everything. There were none but honest men there now.

The supper was hardly rightly begun when Judas left, and as Head of that little company, Jesus took the large cup of wine and water, perhaps the second, perhaps the third cup, and giving the usual thanks for the wine, handed it to John, who was nearest to him, saying—

“Take this, and divide it among yourselves, for I will not drink wine after to-night, until Heaven shall come.” And the wine cup went round the table again from one to another, every disciple drinking from it. Next, as Head of the table, Jesus took a cake of the unleavened bread, and giving thanks for it, broke it and handed a part to John as a sign that they should now begin the real supper of bread and lamb and herbs, saying as He did so—

“This is like My body which is given for you. Do this in memory of Me.” And then they all, putting herbs between pieces of the bread, and dipping them in the bowl of “Charoseth,” began to eat their real supper. The hot lamb was on the table, roasted whole, with its head and feet still on, for not a bone of it might be broken; and from it they all took pieces with their fingers, dipping them in the bowl of “Charoseth” and the salt, and eating them with bread and herbs until they were satisfied. And they were all hungry, as it was the rule that they might not eat anything after noon of that day, in order to come hungry to the glad Passover supper. In the course of the evening, Jesus talked of many things, and the disciples asked many questions. Judas being away relieved His mind, and made Him feel glad, as He exclaimed—

“Now am I glorified, and God is glorified in Me! Soon will He glorify Me.” Then, speaking in tones of the tenderest endearment, as He looked on these men, some of them older than Himself, with clear dark eyes glowing with passionate

love, and using childlike words, which He could not have used with Judas present, He said—

“Little children, for a little while longer I will be with you, and then you will look for Me; but, as I have told the people,—whither I go, you cannot come.” Then, as He thought of their quarrels with each other, He added, “*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. As I have loved you, so must you love one another. By this shall the people know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another.*” As the disciples thought over this, the most beautiful command that has ever been given by a Leader to his followers—a command from God—Peter also thought of what Jesus had said about going away whither they could not follow. Over hill and dale, sea and desert, he, the hardy fisherman, could go anywhere that Jesus could; for death did not enter his mind.

“Whither art Thou going?” Peter asked, wonderingly.

“I am going whither thou canst not come,” Jesus replied gently, “but afterwards thou shalt follow Me”—for Peter would also die; and looking round upon them all, Jesus added, “You shall all be displeased with Me to-night. It shall be as is written in the Book of Zechariah—

“‘Awake, O sword! against My shepherd,

“‘And against the man that is My fellow,’ saith the Lord of Hosts:

“‘Smite the shepherd! and the sheep shall be scattered:

“‘And I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones.’

But,” Jesus continued, “after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.” Thus telling them where they would see Him again. “Peter, Peter!” He exclaimed, “the spirit of evil hath asked to have thee, that thou mayest be sifted like wheat. But I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not under the trial, and when thou hast turned again, strengthen and teach thy brother disciples.” Peter was thus to be the chief disciple; but his hasty temper rushed on too fast, causing him to contradict Jesus.

“Why cannot I follow Thee now?” Peter asked. “Although all the others be displeased with Thee, Master! yet I will not

be displeased. I am ready to go both to prison and to death with Thee. I will die for Thee." Jesus answered this hot outburst quietly. He knew that Peter had not yet been tried, and He understood his nature.

"Thou wilt die for Me?" He asked, repeating Peter's own words. "I tell thee, Peter, that to-day, even this very night, before the cock croweth in the morning, thou shalt three times deny that thou knowest Me." Resting at the cheerful supper-table, in that brightly lighted room, Peter felt confident and brave, and protested of his courage and faithfulness with a loud voice, exclaiming, as he contradicted Jesus again—

"Even if I have to die with Thee, I will never say I do not know Thee." And the other disciples, not to be behind Peter, said the same thing, as they lay upon their comfortable couches, with no thought of swords, soldiers, and darkness, that they were willing to die for Jesus. He did not answer their brave, foolish words, but went on to remind them of the time, about two years before, when He sent them out two by two to teach; and He told them that they would go out again, but in a very different way.

"When I sent you out," He said, "without purse, bag, or shoes, did you want for anything?"

"Nothing," they replied; and He continued—

"But now I say that whoever hath a purse or a bag, let him take it; and whoever hath no sword, let him sell his cloak and buy one. For these words of Isaiah must happen to Me—

" 'He hath poured out His soul unto death.

" 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.'

And the things about Me must have an end." Hearing Jesus speak of swords, one of the disciples rose and made inquiry in the house for such things; and thinking that Jesus really wished swords with which to defend Himself that night, he said, holding them up—

"Master, see! Here are two swords." Jesus looked at them, saying as He did so—

"It is enough!"—meaning that He did not wish them to

get swords, for that would have been contrary to all His teaching. But Peter the brave, took one of them and used it afterwards, and was very severely rebuked for doing so, Jesus Himself healing the injury which Peter did. It was not by swords that they were either to defend themselves or to attack others, but by truthful words and good lives.

And thou wilt learn something from this that is far above swords and fighting, the command which Jesus gave to all His followers. For if men would only obey it, there would soon be no more quarrels, no more wars, no more swords; and the test of His followers is not, Do you go to church? do you pray? do you read your Bible? but, "Do you love each other?"

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

In that quiet room upstairs in Jerusalem, with the door shut and the lamps burning brightly, Jesus had His last opportunity for talking privately with His disciples. The things which He said there, are the greatest sayings of His life, for, in answer to their childlike questions when they could not understand Him, He opened His heart to them, and I shall try to explain much of what He said. He was grieved at the prospect of leaving the disciples, for He saw in their faces that they were afraid to be left alone, and He spoke words of encouragement and comfort to them—

"Let not your hearts be troubled," He said, kindly. "*You believe in God, believe also in Me.* There are many places in My Father's House of Heaven. If it were not so, I would have told you, but I go to prepare a place for you there, and will return and take you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. You know the place, and you know the way." He paused, and they sat thinking for a little, and then the plain-spoken Thomas asked—

"Lord, we do not know whither Thou art going, and how can we know the way?" He had not understood that Jesus

was speaking of Heaven after death. But looking at him, Jesus replied—

“Thomas, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; no one cometh to God, but by Me.*” For three years Jesus had taught His disciples that to have His Spirit was the only way to have Heaven, and gently chiding Thomas, He added, “*If thou hadst known Me rightly, thou wouldst also have known God.* Know therefore after this, that *in Me thou both knowest and hast seen God My Father.*” Again Jesus paused, and the disciples wondered what He meant; for they had already forgotten that He had told them before, that God and He were of one Spirit, so that they did not understand Him when He said that in Him they had seen God. It was the youthful Philip who spoke next, and He said earnestly—

“Lord ! show us the Father, and it will satisfy us,” Jesus did not allow this request to pass unnoticed, and He asked Philip in a tone of surprise—

“Have I been so long with you, and yet thou dost not know *Me*, Philip?” As though He had said, “I have shown thee by My life during these past years that the Spirit of God the Father is in Me, and yet thou askest who am I !” and Jesus explained once more how the Spirit of God was in Him. “Whoever hath seen Me,” He continued, “hath seen God the Father ; and how then dost thou ask Me to show thee the Father? Believest thou not, that I am in God, and that God’s Spirit is in Me ?” Receiving no answer, He went on. “*The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself, but the Spirit of God that dwelleth in Me doeth God’s will through Me.*” And He went on to plead with them as He had pled before with the people in the Temple, to believe what He told them, saying—

“Believe My words when I say that I am in God and that God’s Spirit is in Me ; or else believe My words because of the things which you have seen Me do. Truly, he that believeth on Me, the things that I do, he shall do also ; and greater things, because I am going to My Father in Heaven.” Then He gave them a promise, to encourage them when He was gone, saying—

“Whatever you shall ask of God in My name, I will do it, that God may be glorified in Me. If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.” And he gave them also another promise, the promise of His Spirit to dwell in them, saying, “*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*, and I will ask God, and He shall give you a Helper, other than My presence as a Man with you, a Helper that will be with you for ever. And the Helper of which I speak, is the *Spirit of Truth*, which the world will not receive in Me, for the world neither knoweth nor seeth Him in Me, but you know Him, for the Helper is My Spirit, which remaineth with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you forsaken, but will come to you.” His was the sweet Spirit of Truth, of which his disciples had received, but which would come more and more to each of them as they kept the commandments of Jesus, to comfort and teach them from God. Speaking next of His coming death Jesus said—

“In a little while the people will see Me no more, but you will see Me, and because I live, you shall live also, and then you shall understand how that I am in God, and you are joined to Me, My Spirit being in you.” And this is how the disciples were to show whether they truly loved Jesus. “Whoever hath My commandments,” He continued, “and keepeth them, loveth Me truly; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of God in Heaven, and I will love him, and will make Myself known in Spirit to him.” Having thus told them that after He was gone His Spirit would be in every one who loved Him, Jesus paused, and Jude, thinking Jesus meant that He would return again, and be seen only by those in that room and not by all men as Jude thought He would be, he asked—

“Lord what has happened that Thou wilt make Thyself known to us Thy disciples, and not to all the world?” But Jude was wrong, and Jesus at once told him that He was speaking of His Spirit and of how any one may have Him.

“*If a man loveth Me,*” Jesus replied, “*he will obey Me, and God will love him, and We will come and dwell in Spirit with him.*” But he that loveth Me not, will not obey My words,

which, as I have said, are not Mine alone, but the words of God My Father who sent Me." Having thus corrected Jude, Jesus went on to say that His Spirit would teach them more than He had yet told them—

"I have told you these things," He said, "while still living among you, but the Helper, that is, the Holy Spirit of which I spoke, and which God will send to you in My name, He shall teach you all things, and cause you to remember all that I have said to you." Then, as though blessing them with that sweet inward peace and strength, which they had seen Him have all His life, He said, "*Peace I leave with you ; My peace I give to you ; but not as the world giveth, give I this peace to you.* Let not your hearts be troubled, nor afraid." He continued. "You have heard Me say, that though I go away now, I shall come in Spirit again. If you really loved Me, you would have rejoiced to hear Me say so, because I am going to My Father in Heaven, who is greater than I. Now I have told you before it happeneth, so that when it cometh, you may all believe." He wished them, when His Spirit took fuller possession of them, revealing all His will afresh, to remember that He had told them on that night, alone in that room, that it would be so. And He added sadly and regretfully, as He thought of the sweet time they had had that night together—

"I will not speak much with you any more, for the prince of the world, the spirit of evil, cometh, who hath nothing in Me ; but he cometh that all men may know that I love God, and do what He commandeth. Rise," He added, "let us go out," for it was now getting late. But no one in the room seemed willing to rise and put an end to what might be their last quiet meeting together, and they remained, waiting for Jesus to speak again.

Now much of this, my child, thou wilt not understand, but what is simplest in it is also greatest—how to have the Spirit of Jesus within thee, guiding thee. For He said to His disciples that if they loved Him, they would try to do what He told them, and that His Holy Spirit would be with them more and more, teaching them all their lives what God's will is,

and helping them to obey Him. And what Jesus said to them, He meant for thee also ; and the more thou givest up thyself to His gentle guidance, the more wilt thou be guided.

THE VINE AND ITS BRANCHES.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Seeing that His disciples did not wish to go out yet, Jesus resumed speaking to them, as they lay on their couches in the large room upstairs in Jerusalem. I cannot tell thee all He said, but will continue to explain parts of it ; and trust that when thou art older thou wilt read every word often for thyself, in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel written by His favourite disciple John, who was there and heard Him speaking. He told them a beautiful story about the vine tree, the emblem of the Jewish nation, with its thick brown stem, from which slender branches spread out, covered with broad green leaves and bunches of purple fruit. He said that He was the Tree, and the disciples His branches, who drew their life from Him—

I am like a vine, He said, and you are like the branches, for I am the True Vine, and God is the Gardener. Every branch that hath no fruit on it God taketh away, and every branch that hath fruit He traineth that it may have more fruit. You are My branches because of the words which I have spoken to you. Continue joined to Me, and My spirit will live in you ; for just as a branch cannot have any fruit unless it be joined to the tree, so you cannot have good deeds unless you be joined to Me. Whoever liveth joined to Me, and hath My Spirit in him, shall do much good, but separated from Me, you can do nothing. If a man be not joined to Me, he is like a dead branch of a tree, without sap, cast off and withered, that is gathered up to be flung into the fire and burned. But if you live joined to Me, and My words which are My Spirit live in you, then you may ask what you will of Me, and it shall be done. By having much fruit, you shall glorify God, and be My disciples. Having told this beautiful story about the Vine and the sap, to show how His disciples were to be joined to Him, Jesus re-

turned again to His favourite subject, His love for them, and their love for each other, saying, as He tried to make these great things as plain and simple to them as they were to Him—

“In the same way that God loveth Me, do I love you—continue then in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall be loved by Me, just as I have kept God’s commandments and am loved by Him.” Then He told them why He repeated His sayings so often to them. “I have spoken these things to you that My joy may be in you, and that you may be full of joy.” Thus telling them that His Spirit was not a sad and sorrowing one, but a joyful Spirit. And again He repeated His great commandment of love, saying. “*This is My commandment, Love one another, as I have loved you.* No man can love his friends more than this, that he is willing to die for them. You are My friends if you do what I tell you. I shall call you servants no longer, for a servant knoweth not what his master doeth, but I have called you My ‘friends,’ for I have told you all that I have heard from God.” Thinking of the time, now more than three years ago, when on the green hill by the blue Lake of Galilee, He first chose them to be His disciples, He said—

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I appointed you to be My disciples that your good deeds should live. I command you,” He said with energy, returning for the last time, and with even greater force, to His great commandment, “*I command you, that you love one another.* If bad men hate you, you know that they hated Me before they hated you. If you were like these bad people, they would love you, but because you are not like them, and because I chose you out from among them, they will hate you.” And then Jesus reminded them of how much He had been hated, saying, “If I had not done things which no other one ever did, these men would not have hated Me; but now they have both seen and hated Me and God also, and the words of King David in the 69th Psalm are true :

“ ‘They that hate me without a cause, are more than the hairs of my head.’ ”

And once more He spoke to them of what they would have to suffer from bad men, and of His Spirit, which would help them, saying—

“But when the Helper is come to you, whom I will send from My Father in Heaven, even the Spirit of Truth, which cometh from God, He shall be a witness for Me in you, and you all shall be witnesses for Me, because you have seen Me and been with Me in all My journeyings from the beginning of My teaching. But the day will come that whoever killeth you will think that he is serving God; and they will do this because they have not known God nor Me. I have spoken of these things that when your hour of trial cometh you may remember that I told you of them beforehand. I did not tell you all these things when you first came to Me, because I was with you Myself, but now I am going to God, who sent Me,” and with a sudden break in His line of thought, Jesus added sorrowfully, “And not one of you asketh Me whither I am going,” then noticing the sad look which came into the faces of His disciples, He continued gently, as He looked at them with compassionate eyes, “Because I have spoken of these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts; but I tell you truly, it is better for you that I should go away, for if I were not to go the Helper, the Spirit of Truth, would not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him.”

It was now late at night, the supper was over, and the sorrowful faces of His disciples told Jesus that the evening which had begun so cheerfully, was ending in fear and doubt for them, and He saw that their minds were not able to take in all that He could yet say. His near approaching death was also pressing heavily upon Him, but He loved them so, that all His thoughts were for them, and He was reluctant to end this, the most solemn, tender, and memorable, outpouring of His heart.

“I have still many things to say to you,” He said tenderly, “you cannot bear them now; but *when the Spirit of Truth cometh, He shall guide you into all Truth.* He shall glorify Me, for He shall take what is Mine and tell it to you, for all the

things that God hath, are Mine." Repeating again the words He had used in the beginning of the evening, He said, "In a little while you will see Me no more; and in a little while you shall see Me again." And He paused, silently thinking while His disciples, filled with awe of Him, began to whisper to each other—

"What is this He saith to us? 'A little while and you shall not see Me!' We know not what He meaneth——"

"Why do you ask each other about My saying, 'A little while?'" Jesus said gently, and then added, referring to His death, "I tell you truly that you shall weep and be sorrowful, but bad men will be glad. You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. Now you are sorrowful, but I will see you again in Spirit, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one shall take that joy away from you. In that glad day you shall have no more questions to ask Me. But if you shall ask anything of God He will give you it in My name. You have asked nothing yet in My name. Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Before ending all His sayings, He reminded them of the many beautiful stories with a meaning which He had so often told them.

"These things I have told you in stories," He said, "but the time will come when I shall no more speak to you in stories, but will tell you plainly about My Father in Heaven. He loveth you because you have loved Me, and because you believe that I came from God. *I came out from God into the world, and now I shall leave the world and go again to Him.*" And some of the disciples who had been trying to understand where Jesus was going to, exclaimed with satisfaction—

"Now thou speakest plainly, and not in stories. Now there is no need that any man should ask Thee questions, for we understand that Thou knowest everything, and by this we believe that Thou camest out from God. Once more, for a time at least, the disciples firmly believed that Jesus was from God; but He knew that their confident belief would fade away as it had done before.

"Do you now believe?" He said to them gently, adding

in tones of sorrowful warning, "But the time cometh, yes, and hath now come! when you, My disciples, shall be scattered, every one returning to his own people, and shall leave Me alone. And yet I shall not be alone, for God is ever with Me." And looking at them tenderly, He uttered these last words to the downcast men, words of gladness, strength, and peace, spoken in the very face of death—

"I have told you of these things, that, trusting in Me, you may have peace. In the world you shall have trouble, but be glad! for I have overcome the world."

And thou, my child, wilt try to remember the last words of Jesus to His disciples on that memorable night, and never lose thy peace and gladness of heart, for if thou hast His Holy Spirit, then thou hast in thee the Spirit of Him who overcame the world, and greater is He that is in thee than any that can be against thee.

Far, far away, like bells at even pealing,
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,
And little feet in thousands meekly stealing—
Kind Shepherd! turn their little steps to Thee.

AND THIS IS HEAVEN.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

When Jesus had finished all that He had to say, the disciples rose from their couches round the supper table and stood ready to go out. He had poured out His heart to them in all its womanly love, and although His tone had been one of gladness and of confidence, He was sorry for them, telling them to love Him and love each other, and trust in God, and that His Holy Spirit would guide them when they could no more see His face, nor hear His human voice. The solemn moment of parting had come, and ere they left the table there was a hush of silence, for they saw that Jesus was about to pray. He prayed aloud, a beautiful gentle prayer, for His disciples, and as His wonderful voice rose calm and clear in the silent room,

they bowed their heads in reverence and listened. With hands clasped before Him their young Master stood, His beautiful face upraised, His brown hair falling on His white tunic, and His clear dark eyes gazing as though He saw the very face of the Father in Heaven to whom He spoke in such passionate words.

“Father!” He prayed, “the time hath come. Glorify Thy Son that I may glorify Thee. Thou gavest Me power over men, that I should give them Heaven.” And with low earnest voice He uttered these precious words: “*And this is Heaven, to know Thee the only true God, and Me the Christ whom Thou didst send.* I have glorified Thee on earth, and have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father! glorify Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” And thus the amazed disciples heard Him tell His Father in Heaven that His work was done, and ask God to glorify Him in death. Then speaking of His disciples, who stood around Him with bowed heads, Jesus continued—

“My Father! I have made known Thy Name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world. They were Thine, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy words. Now they know that all that I have is from Thee. The words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them, and they have received them, and know it is true that I came from Thee. They believe that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for the disciples whom Thou gavest Me. They are Thine. All things that are Mine are Thine, and all things that are theirs are Mine. I am glorified in them. I shall live no more in the world, but these men shall live in the world. I come to Thee.

“Holy Father! in Thy name keep these My disciples which Thou hast given Me, that they may be all of one spirit, as we are of One Spirit. While I was with them, I kept them in Thy name, and guarded them, which Thou gavest Me. Not one of them hath gone wrong, but Judas Iscariot. But now I come to Thee; and I say these things that My disciples

may have joy in themselves. I have given them Thy words. Men hated them because they were not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take My disciples out of the world. I ask that Thou shouldst keep them from the spirit of evil. Purify them in the Truth. *Thy word is Truth.* As Thou didst send Me into the world, so do I send them. For their sakes I purify Myself, that they also may be purified in Truth." Having thus prayed for His disciples that they might be made ever purer by the Spirit of Truth, Jesus widened His prayer to cover all people who should come to love Him and love the Truth, saying—

"Not for these My disciples alone do I ask, but for all people who shall believe in Me throughout the world, that they may all be of one spirit. As Thy Spirit is in Me, and I am united to Thee, so may they be united in Spirit to Us, that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me." Then Jesus again prayed to God that all people who believed on Him might become one in spirit with Him, saying, "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given to My disciples, that they may be one in spirit with Me, just as We are One Spirit. My Spirit being in them, and Thy Spirit in Me, that so they may be made perfect in one spirit, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and lovest them as Thou lovest Me." And in this beautiful ending of His prayer, He asked that His disciples should have Heaven, in these words—

"My Father! I wish that those whom Thou hast given Me, may be with Me where I am; that they may see the glory, which Thou hast given Me, for Thou didst love Me before the world was. O Righteous Father! the world knew Thee not, but I knew Thee, and these My disciples know that Thou didst send Me. I have made known Thy Name to them, and will make it known, that the love with which Thou lovest Me may be in them, and My Spirit also."

And with these pleading words, that the Spirit of God should be as strong and deep in His disciples, as it was in Him, the voice of Jesus ceased. The last prayer was spoken; all was now over. But before going out from a Passover supper

the usual fourth cup of red wine and water was poured out and handed round to be drunk, a short psalm was sung, and blessing said, and then, taking again their cloaks, sandals, and long sticks, the door was opened, and they all went down the outer stair into the moonlit street of Jerusalem. Jesus calm and confident, the disciples fearful of something mysterious hanging over them, which filled the dark shadows with shifting forms, and the air with strange sounds. And did not a cloaked figure retreat into the darkness, as the door opened and in a flood of light the white form of Jesus stepped forth into the night—the lurking figure of Judas Iscariot?

There are many things in this beautiful prayer of Jesus which thou, my child, wilt not understand, but thou canst easily remember to call God thy Father in Heaven when thou prayest, as Jesus did, and to ask that all men may be of one spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, which is the Spirit of God. Then indeed would He be King over all, reigning in the hearts of men in His Kingdom of Heaven in the world.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It would be about eleven o'clock at night when Jesus and His disciples left their friend's house in Jerusalem. As they turned to go back through the streets by which they had come into the city from Bethany, they were met by crowds of people coming joyfully in, for the Passover night was a night of great rejoicing. The houses were lit up with festive lamps, the streets thronged with sightseers, and at midnight the Temple gates were opened wide, that the people might go up in their best dresses, with gifts in their hands for the priests, and continue their joyful feast in the great Women's court, which was made almost as bright as day by the dazzling light of the full moon. It was a night when few people went to bed. But Jesus preferred to go away into the quiet country. Passing out by the city gate and across the Kedron bridge, He

saw the wild water flashing in the moonlight, deep down below. On the other side of the valley, at the foot of the hill, there was a sheltered spot, laid out in flower gardens and olive groves, a favourite place for the people of Jerusalem to walk in the cool evenings; and there was a lonely garden there called Gethsemane, the garden of the "Oil Press," into which Jesus often went with His disciples. It was large and noted for its low-spreading, silver-leaved olive trees, that blossomed white in early Spring, and whose dark green fruit, when ripe, was gathered and pressed for oil; and it belonged to a friend of Jesus who allowed Him to come and walk among the flowers and grass under the green trees, whenever He liked.

And as they walked this night along the road from the bridge to Olivet, Jesus, who was in front, turned aside from the people and went through the gate into this Garden of Gethsemane, and His disciples followed Him into the shade of the olive trees, through which the moonlight fell in broken patches on the flowers and grass. And all was still and hushed around them, as they walked into the deeper solitude. But there was one who saw them go in, and he turned and ran back to the city with the news—*Judas Iscariot*. Following the winding path-way into the depths of the garden, they came to a grassy place, and Jesus turned round and faced His disciples, and they saw that He was sad and troubled, as He said to them—

"Sit you here, while I go yonder and pray," pointing to a place a good way further into the garden; and taking Peter, James, and John with Him, He walked away. And as they went, they saw His face in the moonlight that a great change had come over Him, for He began to be amazed and deeply troubled. At the supper He had been cheerful and calm, on the road He had gone in front of them, but now He seemed in greater trouble than they had ever seen Him before; oppressed with the deepest pain and sadness, and stopping, He said, in a voice of emotion—

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to death. Wait for Me here, and watch." And His face was pale as He turned

from the three men, and walked with bowed head deeper into the garden, about as far as one might throw a stone. Wrapping their thick cloaks about them, they lay down on the grass to watch Jesus, and to keep guard of any one coming. In the glimpses of the moon breaking through the olive trees they saw Him moving on. He stood still. He fell upon His face. And they heard Him praying to His Father in Heaven, as though in the greatest agony of soul, and saying—

“Father! if it be possible, let this pass away from Me. But not My will, but Thine be done.” Something was causing Him the most exquisite torture of mind. What it was, the disciples did not know, and we cannot tell. He remained a long time upon His face in prayer, while the silver leaves whispered round Him, and when He rose and returned to the three men, He found that their eyes had grown weary with watching, and they were all asleep.

“What! Peter! dost *thou* sleep?” Jesus said in surprise. “Couldst thou not watch with Me for one hour?” Peter, who had promised so much, already asleep at his watch! Then more gently Jesus said to them all, “Your minds are willing, but your bodies are weak. Watch and pray, that you may not be tempted.” And the three men were deeply grieved to see the sorrow of their young Master, as He turned and walked back into the shadowy depths of the garden, where He again fell upon His face, and they heard Him again praying to His Father in Heaven, and saying—

“O My Father! if this cannot pass away from Me unless I do it, then, Thy will be done.” I cannot tell thee what led Jesus back into these dark shades thus in agony to pray and implore; but it was with pain unspeakable that He besought God a second time regarding this awful thing. Again He remained a long time in prayer, prostrate on the sweet Spring grass, for when He returned to His three disciples, they were again asleep, and awoke with a start to find Him standing beside them, pale and sad, looking down at them, but saying nothing. They did not know what to say. They were filled with shame and grief that they should enjoy refreshing sleep

while Jesus was suffering such agony. Without saying a word, He turned and went back into the dark depths of the garden for the third time, to pray the same beseeching prayer—

“O My Father! if this cannot pass away from Me except I do it, then, Thy will be done.” A short, brief, intense cry to God, uttered with even greater agony and earnestness than before, for as Jesus continued praying the sweat of His brow ran down in drops of red blood, dropping upon His white tunic, dropping upon the quivering grass. He grew weak with anguish, and through the black olive branches there appeared the figure of an angel from Heaven, with moonlight on his wings, that stood beside Him strengthening Him. When Jesus at length rose to His feet He was strong again. The trial was over. He had defeated all the terrors that had assailed Him. Calm and confident now, He returned once more to His three disciples, to find them again asleep for sorrow, and looking at them in pity as they lay unconscious at His feet, He said—

“Sleep on now, and take your rest,” then added quickly, as He saw the light of a torch flashing through the trees, “See! I am betrayed into the hands of wicked men. Rise! let us go, the betrayer is near.” They were surprised—caught! Springing to their feet, the bewildered disciples looked at Jesus, but no longer to see in His face the signs of trouble and almost terror. He was calm now, and His clear dark eyes had again that light in them with which he used to meet His enemies in the Temple—but those blood red spots on His white tunic! What were they? And what these voices, and moving lights out upon the road? And they all hastened forward through the garden to rouse the other disciples.

My child, we know not with what awful thing Jesus was tried in that garden, but it was for us He bore the bitter agony. Perhaps the spirit of evil tempted Him with terrible energy, not to let Himself be taken a prisoner, not to die at thirty-three, but to finish His work some other way—by fleeing from death. But Jesus ever left His will with God, and in the end He had strength given Him which never wavered

through all that dreadful night, and which raised Him far above His judges, their insults, their scourging—above death itself.

HE IS TAKEN A PRISONER.

JERUSALEM, THURSDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

While Jesus was praying in the moonlit olive garden, Judas was at the Golden Temple. He told the priests in breathless haste that now was their time to take Him, and he found everything ready. The priests had been to Pilate, the Roman governor, who had agreed to let a guard of Roman soldiers go with them to keep order. Their own Temple guards were ready, and when Judas came running, hot and excited, with the news that Jesus was in a large hedged-in garden only a little way from the city gate, and that he would take the soldiers to the very place; believing that they might never have such a chance again—in a lonely garden and at midnight—the priests decided to have Jesus taken a prisoner at once. They sent for the Roman soldiers, they sent for the Temple guards, with orders to bring lanterns to see Him, and cords to bind Him, and clubs,—for the guards might not carry swords. When all was ready, they marched quickly down the streets from the Temple, some of the priests going with them to see Jesus taken. On the way, a number of people, attracted by the sight of armed men at night, followed after them, and Judas went in front, to lead the way. It was about midnight when the priests and soldiers came outside the garden of Gethsemane, and they stopped in the road, while lanterns were lit and hung upon poles—although it was full moonlight—and torches were beaten and shaken into a flame, so that every shadow and recess under the trees might be carefully searched. Judas arranged that he should go first into the garden, as though he were still a friend, and speak to the disciples, and that the guards should follow him and keep him in sight, and when they saw him kiss some one, they were to rush forward at once and secure Him, for that one would be

Jesus. Perhaps in his secret thoughts Judas hoped that by this scheme, his old friends the disciples might never know that he had had anything to do with the capture of their young Master.

He accordingly went in first, and he had not gone far until he saw the little group of Jesus and His disciples standing together in the moonlight, and he went towards them as though he had finished what he had been sent out from the supper-room to do, and was joining them again. But before he could reach them, the band of priests, soldiers, guards, people with smoking torches and lamps above their heads, turned also into the gate, and came crowding through the garden, lighting up with lurid glare the black tree stems and the silvery leaves. Judas, hearing them coming behind him, hastened on, and as soon as he reached the little group, he went hurriedly up to Jesus, and with a beating heart exclaimed—

“Hail, Master !” greeting Jesus as they all used to do, and pressing forward his dusky face, he would have kissed Him again and again with great effusiveness. But Jesus stepped back.

“Judas !” He exclaimed, “wouldest thou betray Me with a kiss ?” The thing was too horrible. To use this old sign of trust, the sign of greatest love, a kiss ! as the signal to His enemies to set on Him ! “Friend,” Jesus added, as Judas stood, not knowing what to do now, for the guards were near, “do that for which thou art come out.” By this time the soldiers and others, hurrying forward, were close behind Judas, standing in a mixed crowd of priests, guards, idlers, with their lights smoking uselessly in the moonlit air ; they also were in doubt, for they had not seen the signal—Judas had kissed no one.

“Whom do you seek ?” said Jesus, turning to them and standing in front of His disciples, and several voices answered from the crowd—

“Jesus of Nazareth !”

“*I am He,*” was His clear reply, which caused the foremost

of them to stagger backward and fall, for there was no fear in that face and voice, but rather commanding boldness. They were afraid to touch Him of whom they had heard such wonderful things, and kept back, while the Roman soldiers looked on, for they were there to keep order only, not to arrest Jesus. The people looked to each other, and in the confusion—

“Whom do you seek?” Jesus asked again, for He wished to make sure that His disciples would not be taken.

“Jesus of Nazareth,” was again the answer.

“I have told you that I am He,” Jesus answered again ; adding, in a tone of command, “If you seek Me let these men go,” pointing to His disciples as He spoke.

His words gave courage to the guards, for evidently there was to be no resistance, and coming nearer, they were going to take hold of Jesus, but when the disciples saw what was about to be done, some of them exclaimed—

“Master ! shall we strike with the sword ?” and Peter and another man held up their two paltry swords. Jesus did not answer, for the guards were upon Him, but Peter did not wait for orders, his temper was up, and from behind Jesus he aimed a hard blow at the head of the first man who attempted to touch his young Master, a blow so sudden that it cut off the man’s ear. Then a tumult of cries arose, the Roman soldiers who stood by with the lights reflected on their shining armour grasped their short swords, and there would have been fighting and bloodshed, for Peter was ready for another stroke, had not Jesus called to him in a voice of command—

“Peter, put up thy sword into its sheath.” With a scowling face Peter did so ; and Jesus continued, “All who take the sword, shall perish with the sword.” And, to put an end to all thoughts of fighting, He said to His disciples as they saw Him being roughly held by the men round Him, “Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father in Heaven, and He shall even now give Me more than twelve legions of angels ?” Then, turning to the wounded man, who was one

of the high priest's servants, called Malchus, He gently touched his ear and made it whole again. And as the guards held Jesus firmly and tied His hands with rough cords, He saw among the dusky faces about Him, some of the chief priests and captains of the Temple, and also elders—the men whom two days before He had called vipers and hypocrites in the Temple itself. Looking round upon the brass helmets and shields, the iron pikes and swords of the silent Roman soldiers, who stood by in the moonlight, and on the clubs of their own Temple guards, Jesus said with stinging irony—

“Have you come out against a robber with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat every day teaching in the Temple, and you did not put out your hands against Me. But this is the hour of your triumph, and of the power of darkness.” Now when the disciples heard Jesus say that there was to be no resistance, and that His enemies had triumphed, they grew afraid, and getting out of the crowd as quickly as they could, they all forsook Him and fled, some hiding in dark parts of the garden, some running out to the roads and the hills as if for their lives, while some fled to Bethany to tell them there, that Jesus had been taken a prisoner by the priests.

A Captive! with His hands tied, and guarded by soldiers, as though He had been secured after a desperate struggle, Jesus was led away; and soon the lights and the clamour of tongues passed out of the moonlit garden, leaving it silent and deserted, save for the voice of the sad night wind, and the whispering of the leaves together, and for the crouching, trembling figures of a few hiding disciples. Out into the road He was taken, deserted by all His friends, and yet there was one who followed—a young man, supposed to have been called Mark. Roused from his sleep by the noise, and hastily casting on a thin white robe, he had come out to see what it all meant, and hearing that his friend Jesus had been taken a prisoner, he followed in the crowd. But it became known that Mark was a friend, and hands were laid on him to take him a prisoner also, but loosening his white robe he left it in their hands as he fled away and disappeared in the dark.

Peter and John also, coming out of their hiding-places in the garden, followed the guards into the city a long way behind, to hear where Jesus was taken to.

And thou, my child, wilt remember, that it is not by swords and by fighting that any good thing is to be done for Jesus. His power is far above swords, and it is nobler to bear violence, than to meet blow with blow.

BEFORE THE COCK CROWS.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

The streets of Jerusalem were comparatively quiet, when the guards brought Jesus a prisoner into the city, for many of the people were at the midnight services in the Temple or in their own houses. They did not take Him to the Temple, for that would have been to tempt a riot, but they took Him across the great high bridge over the Tyropœan Valley which ran through the city, and to the palace of Annas in the upper town on the side of Mount Zion, behind the Temple. Now Annas was a great man, chief of the most powerful of the Sadducee families. He was seventy years of age, and had at one time been high-priest for over seven years, and he had five sons who had each been high-priest in turn after him. He was also father-in-law to Caiaphas, the present high-priest, who was completely under his influence. Rich and greedy, he hated Jesus for the way He had spoken of the priests, and the traders in the Temple from whom he made money, and when Jesus was brought in by the guards to stand before him with His hands tied, the eyes of Annas glittered with wicked satisfaction, as he looked at His pale face and blood-spotted tunic.

As soon as the armed guards had left the Temple to take Jesus a prisoner, the chief priests arranged that whenever Jesus came into the city, their council should meet at the palace of the high-priest, and have Him at once brought before them for examination. And now while the guards kept Him safely a captive at his palace, the old man Annas sent messages to the Temple and to Caiaphas and the other councillors, to tell

them that Jesus, their enemy, had been taken, and to come *immediately* to the high-priest's palace on Mount Zion.

They were to meet there to try Jesus, chief Priests, Lawyers, Elders—serpents ! vipers ! hypocrites !—to be at once His accusers and His judges, for they had power to find Him guilty of breaking their religious laws, and deserving of death, and then they thought they could get the Roman governor to put Him to death. They would try Jesus *at once* before their small council, although it was in the night time, and at day-break they would get the large Council to confirm their sentence, hurry Him before the Roman governor, and have Him put to death before His friends could be able to raise the people in His favour. But to do this, they would have to set aside the rules of their Council for all such trials and the laws of their country, among which were the following : That every prisoner must have some one to speak for him ; that the prisoner was innocent until witnesses proved him guilty ; that no trial could go on in the night ; that the sentence could not be given till the day after the trial ; that an execution could not take place till the day after the sentence ; that there must be some one to accuse the prisoner ; that it needed two witnesses to prove a thing, and that an enemy could not sit in the council to judge him ; and all the rules were to be observed with extra care in cases of life and death. But the chief Priests resolved that the trial of Jesus must go on *at once*, night or no night, and having broken this important rule, they found no difficulty in setting the other rules aside, as they came up, until the whole trial of Jesus became such a mockery, that very soon after it began He refused to speak again, letting them do as they pleased.

Having sent for the councillors, Annas ordered the guards to take Jesus, bound, to the high-priest's palace, which was higher up the hill among the gardens and palaces on Mount Zion. Out of the lighted courtyard of Annas's house the guards conducted Him into the main street, and marched up the hill till they came to the gate of the gardens round Caiaphas's palace. Going through the beautiful gardens, they

came to the gate of the outer court of the palace, through which they passed. Crossing this court they went through a low, strong stone archway, which was the entrance to the inner court, that was planted with shady trees and sweet flowers, round which the palace with its pavements, terraces, arches, and pillars of marble, was built. The people who followed the guards crowded into this open inner court to see what would be done with Jesus, but the guards took Him up some broad marble steps to a terrace above, there to wait until the councillors were ready inside the palace.

Peter and John had followed Jesus into the city, and also from Annas's house to Caiaphas's palace, and John, who knew the doorkeeper at the stone archway, got into the inner courtyard with the crowd; but Peter was stopped at the inner gate, because he was not known. When John missed Peter, he went to the young girl who kept the gate, and got Peter in as his friend, and they went over to a large fire of glowing charcoal that the guards had lighted in an iron brazier in the palace yard to warm themselves, for the night was cold. While they stood there, the girl who kept the gate, coming over to the fire, noticed that Peter was a stranger, and going up to him, looked closely at his face, lit up by the red glare of the fire, and said to the guards who were near—

"This man was also with Jesus of Nazareth," for she recognised Peter. Her careless remark, which may have meant little, frightened him.

"Woman! I do not know Him," Peter exclaimed hastily; "nor do I understand thee," he added, telling a double lie. The girl turned away, but Peter felt very uncomfortable standing there among the guards. And leaving the fire, he went over to the dark stone archway at the entrance gate, to stand where he would not be so much noticed. But the servants of the high-priest were there, talking about Jesus, and of how all His disciples had fled and escaped, and that some of them might be lurking about to see what was done, and the same girl, seeing Peter again, and not believing what he had said at the fire, said to her friends, as she pointed to him—

"This is one of them." But Peter denied it, exclaiming with an oath, as was the fashion among the common people of the time, that he was not ; and so he escaped again.

From the gateway he went away uneasily to another part of the court, from which he could see Jesus standing with His guards on the terrace above, and he waited there a good time. While he stood watching what was being done, the girl told some of the men about her, and they began to think that Peter had no right there at all, and some of those who had heard him speak at the fire came over to him again.

"Indeed thou art one of them, for thy way of speaking showeth thee to be from Galilee," said one of the men.

"Did I not see thee in the garden with Him?" exclaimed another, going close up to him, a relation of the very servant whose ear Peter had cut off in Gethsemane.

"Man," exclaimed Peter in fear, "I do not know what thou sayest ! I do not know this man Jesus of whom you speak." And with oaths and curses he swore that what he said was true. With doubtful looks the men went away, leaving Peter standing alone ; and in the silence which followed his loud curses, he heard for the first time, far away outside the palace walls, sounding weirdly in the night wind, the distant crowing of a cock. At once he looked to Jesus, and at that instant Jesus also looked,—perhaps He, too, had heard the oaths and the cock-crow, their eyes met for an instant, and Peter turned suddenly away. The sight of that calm pale face brought back with a rush what Jesus had said in the supper-room—that Peter would three times deny that he knew Him ; and overcome with shame and sorrow, Peter hurried out of the lighted courtyard, out into the dark street, and wept bitterly, as he thought again and again of what he had done.

My child, it is not likely that thou wilt ever have to risk thy life or liberty by acknowledging that thou art a follower of Jesus, but often thou wilt have to choose whether thou wilt deny Him and have a little more money, a little more praise, a little more pleasure, or idleness, or power, or by acknowledg-

ing Him lose some of these ; and I trust thou wilt not hesitate which to do.

“ Jesus bids us shine, with a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle burning in the night ;
In the world there’s darkness, so we must shine,—
You in your small corner, I in mine.”

A MOCK TRIAL.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It took some time to get the council of priests gathered together in the middle of the night. Some were in bed asleep, and others were at the midnight Temple services ; but while they were gathering, Caiaphas sent for other men from different parts of the city ; men who had before said things against Jesus ; that they might come and be witnesses at the trial which was to go on at once. The members of the council came in by the arched gateway, and hurrying up the broad steps, went into the palace, which was now lighted up, but the witnesses waited in the palace yard below, where there were a good number of people and guards.

It was past midnight. At length Caiaphas thought that a sufficient number of Priests and Lawyers had arrived to go on with the trial, and going into the lighted council hall, they all took their places. Jesus was sent for. The guards led Him up the broad marble steps, through the splendid palace, and into the council hall. With His hands still tied with cords, although He had made no attempt to escape, and with an officer standing beside Him, He was placed before His judges. There, in a half circle, the old men sat cross-legged upon their red cushions, with Caiaphas in the middle, and Annas beside him, and his brothers, John and Alexander, scowling under their priests’ hats—the men whom He had called vipers and hypocrites,—His judges !

Pale, tired, fearless, Jesus stood silently facing them, His tall strong figure clad in a countryman’s simple white tunic, alas ! now blood-spotted and soiled with the hands of His

captors, His hands still tied tightly in front of Him. As He looked round at the show of formality with which His judges were arranged, He thought He was to be lawfully and properly tried, and was ready to answer any charge that might be brought against Him, but He must first hear of what He was accused. There, in fine white robes, as His principal judge, sat Caiaphas, who, about three months before, had advised the council that Jesus should be killed for the public safety, and round him, as junior judges, sat the men who had then agreed that He must die.

The trial began. Caiaphas, as president of the council, first asked Jesus what had become of His disciples, their names, and all about them; and Jesus answered these questions. Caiaphas perhaps expected the disciples would have been taken prisoners with Him. He then asked Jesus to tell the council what He had *secretly* taught the people, and what was the object of His teaching. He believed He had been secretly telling the people that He was the Christ, and stirring them up to support Him. But, before any of these questions were put, Jesus should have been told of what He was accused, and He now saw that this haughty priest Caiaphas was artfully trying to get Him to say things on which to found a charge against Him, of secretly setting the people against the Roman power; and He answered him calmly, by asking for His accusers, saying—

“I have spoken openly to all men, in the Temple and in the churches, where the people meet. I have said nothing in secret. Why, then, dost thou ask Me what I have taught? Rather ask the people who have heard Me, to tell what I have said to them. They know all that I have said.” The reply that Jesus got was a heavy blow from the hand of His guard, who exclaimed—

“Dost Thou answer the high-priest so?” And Caiaphas saw the blow given, but said nothing. It was usual for prisoners to cringe and whine before him, and he was not sorry to see Jesus struck in this outrageous manner for speaking like his equal. This blow, passing unrebuked, told

Jesus only too plainly that the whole proceedings were a mockery,—that He was there to be punished, not to be tried. And it was the first of many blows that He would receive that night.

“If I have ever spoken wickedly to the people,” Jesus said, turning to the officer who struck Him, “come forward as a witness and give evidence against Me. But if I have not done so, why didst thou strike Me?” No one replied to this appeal, but the officer did not forget the rebuke of Jesus when afterwards he had Him in his power.

Caiaphas now ordered evidence to be brought, since Jesus would not confess to any fault, and called for the witnesses to come in who had before spoken against Him. True or false, they must come and speak. Men were accordingly brought in, one by one, and questioned as to what they had to say. The first man who came said a trifling thing and went out. The next man who came would not say the same thing as the first, but said some other trifling thing, and went out; the third man said something quite different from the other two, and would not support what they had said—and so the trial went on. But no two men could be got to accuse Jesus of the same thing, and the council became very uneasy, and some of the judges rose and went quietly out, to look for more and better witnesses and to prepare them beforehand. Going into the palace yard below, they sought for men to speak against Him, and though many false witnesses came and spoke, yet even the council saw that the men had said nothing against Jesus which deserved the death sentence. At last two men came forward who remembered the words that He had used in the Temple three years before, and they said this—

“We heard Him say that He was able to destroy the Temple, and to build it in three days, or that He would destroy the Temple that was made with hands, and build a temple without hands in three days, or words like these;” but even about this thing the two witnesses did not quite agree. The night was passing, and Caiaphas got impatient

and angry with the stupid men. He was angry that Jesus had not asked the witnesses any questions, and even when these two men so nearly agreed in what they said, He seemed as though He would take no notice of them also. Ordering the men to remain, Caiaphas demanded of Jesus—

“Answerest Thou nothing? What hast Thou to reply to what these men say against Thee?” Jesus knew that it was useless to speak about accusations, defences, rules of court, false evidence, or justice, at a mock trial in the middle of the night, and before His bitterest enemies, itself an outrage of all law ; and He remained silent.

Caiaphas trembled with anger. Not answer him! the high-priest of Jerusalem! It was an insult! What was to be done? Should they find Jesus guilty of these confused sayings about the Temple? The councillors whispered to each other with heads together, and the people looked on, for evidently the trial had come to a standstill. Caiaphas and Annas whispered together. They wished to have it proved that Jesus had told the people that He was the promised Christ, and that the people expected Him to free them from their Roman conquerors. Why would these stupid witnesses not say what was wanted? Caiaphas knew that Jesus had said He was the Christ, the Son of God, which by their law was blasphemy to say ; and he could bear this delay no longer. Sweeping aside the few paltry rules of prudence which they had been pretending to observe, he sprang to his feet in a passion, and exclaimed loudly to Jesus—

“I adjure Thee by the living God to tell us whether Thou art the Christ the Son of God?” There stood the eager high priest, trembling with anger through every fold of his rich white robe ; there stood Jesus, the Carpenter’s Son, strong, bound, meeting his stare calmly ; and there sat the council on their cushions, while dusky faces crowded at the door, watching the two as they faced each other.

“*I am,*” said Jesus, calmly, “And you shall see Me sitting at the right hand of God, and coming with the clouds of Heaven.” Seizing his linen robes suddenly with both hands

on his breast, Caiaphas rent them in twain to his innermost garment, exclaiming with ill-concealed joy as he did so—

“He hath spoken blasphemy! making Himself equal with God. We need no more witnesses!” And he sank down upon his rich soft cushion as though deeply shocked. It was now his place, as president, to take the vote of the council as to the guilt of the prisoner.

“You have heard the blasphemy?” he said, looking to right and left of him. “What do you think? Doth He deserve death?” And with great gravity all the council answered that Jesus deserved to die for speaking blasphemy—for saying He was the Son of God. Orders were then given that He should be taken away and kept safely, to be brought again before a meeting of the whole council at daybreak, to have the sentence of death confirmed. And as the councillors left the adjourned meeting, they thought that Caiaphas had managed the trial splendidly, for when the accusation had broken down, by one master-stroke he had forced from the lips of the Prisoner an admission that put the matter beyond a doubt. And as Caiaphas went away to get a few hours sleep on his silken couch before day-break, he felt very proud and satisfied with the part he had taken that night.

And what thinkest thou, my child, of the officer who struck Jesus, bound and in the power of His enemies? How mean! how cruel! how cowardly! Beware, then, of the bad spirit that would inflict humiliation, annoyance, or pain, upon any one who may be placed in thy power; but rather be the soother of the sorrowing heart, whether of the innocent or of the guilty, and withhold not from them thy sympathy and kindness.

STRUCK BY SOLDIERS.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Condemned! Jesus was led away from the lighted council hall in charge of the officer who first struck Him, out through the thronged doorway, and down the broad crowded steps to

the palace-yard below. And as He passed through the guards on the stairs they struck at Him, as they had seen their officer do in the hall, and which had seemed to please Caiaphas. Now, a man condemned to die was always an object for cruel sport to these Temple guards, and seeing the officers striking Jesus, the men struck Him too, as He was led in cruel procession across the palace-yard to the guard-room. But He said not a word, not even shielding Himself from their blows.

The search for false witnesses had not passed unobserved by the people, and they soon guessed that their masters would not be sorry to see Jesus degraded and ridiculed. There were still some hours before daybreak, when the council was to meet again; and, regardless of His pale, tired face, the Temple guards and servants of the high-priest, imitating their masters, began, amid shouts of hideous laughter, to make Jesus the Christ! the Son of God! the butt of their coarse wits. But still He remained silent, answering not a word; and as with Caiaphas, so with the guards—His silence made them the more angry. They hated to see His mind so calm and untouched by all their rude insults and impudent jeers; and first with words, then with blows, they tried to force Him to speak, His silence being their point of attack. *They would make Jesus speak.*

“Prophecy who struck Thee,” said one coming behind Him and smiting Him upon the back, while the others laughed at the brutal wit. Others followed in the same way with different questions. But still He remained silent. Growing tired of this, and to show their contempt for such silence, some one stepped up to Him and spat in His face—the greatest insult that a Jew could give; and others came and did the same, while their companions laughed at the patience with which Jesus bore it. The shouts of laughter in the lighted guard-room attracted the attention of those who were out in the palace-yard, and soon the room and doorway were crowded with lookers on.

At length a kind of game was got up, with Jesus as the

victim. He had been called a Prophet by His friends the Galileans. The guards whispered together. They would try Him. Binding a napkin over His eyes, so that He could not see, they pushed Jesus out into the middle of the floor, where He stood, with His hands still bound with cords.

"Prophecy, thou Christ! who struck Thee," said one, stepping up to Him as he spoke, and giving Him a sudden buffet on the face which made the strong young Countryman stagger. But Jesus answered not a word. And others came up, and still He stood, pale, silent, blindfolded, bound, while they struck Him surprising cuffs and sudden blows, to the amusement of the rest. And though there were many hands to strike, there was not one voice to say that there had been enough of this shocking cruelty. Surely the officer whom Jesus rebuked in court had had his revenge!

At length a grey streak appeared in the Eastern sky beyond Olivet, and the torches in the palace-yard and the lamps in the guard-room grew yellow, feeble, smoky, as the merciful angel of the dawn, with fingers dipped in rose, drew aside the curtain of that dreadful night, revealing a pure blue heaven beyond the world. The messengers of Caiaphas had been sent to all the members of the great council of Priests and Rulers, pressing them to attend an important meeting at daybreak. Some time before the dawn, they were gathered in the council hall; and Caiaphas, rising from his couch of silk and carefully dressing himself, went in and took his seat again upon his crimson cushion, in the midst of the full council. Close beside him sat the old serpent Annas.

In a few words Caiaphas explained to the large council what had taken place at their midnight gathering, and that they were summoned in haste to condemn Jesus to death, as had been arranged at previous meetings; and it was resolved to have Him brought in to repeat what He had said before. They all looked to the door, and soon they saw Jesus led into the beautiful hall of marble and gilding—wearied, with hair disordered, clothes soiled, face unwashed. He came forward and

stood calmly facing the council, among whom He recognised more of the vipers ! serpents ! hypocrites ! of the Temple.

“ Art Thou the Christ ? tell us,” said Caiaphas once more. Jesus, who had been silent for hours, spoke again.

“ If I tell you, you will not believe Me,” He answered wearily, for He knew it was all a mockery. “ And if I were to ask you anything, you would not answer Me,” He added sadly. “ But after this, I shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” And He stopped. The council of not less than twenty-three councillors whispered together. The answer was not satisfactory. It was not what they wanted. Another question must be put.

“ Art Thou, then, the Son of God ? ” Caiaphas demanded again, and all were silent as they leant forward to catch the answer.

“ *Thou sayest it, because I am,*” Jesus replied. Then all the judges pretended to be very much shocked, and were very well pleased, as they sat back and said to each other—

“ We do not need witnesses, for we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.” And, with the early sunlight streaming in upon their white hairs, the great council agreed to confirm what Caiaphas and the smaller meeting had done in the night time. Condemned to death again ! Jesus was ordered away while they consulted what they should do next, for it was now about six o’clock in the morning. And they resolved that Jesus should be taken at once to the Roman governor, and that some of the council should go and tell Pilate of what they had found Him guilty, and accuse Him of other things, and demand that Pilate should order Him to be killed, which he alone could do. And the great council separated, some to mingle with the crowd and stir them up with cries before Pilate’s palace.

And thou, my child, wilt learn to avoid all cruel and thoughtless amusements. To these soldiers, their jeers and buffetings were coarse fun ; but to Jesus they were exquisite pain and sorrow. Guard thou thy lips, that no foolish jeers or loose ribaldry shall ever escape thee. Thou

knowest not upon what pure ear or tender heart thy words may fall.

“ A foolish act, or an idle word,
Too lightly done, or too deeply heard ;
A harsh reproof, or a look unkind,
May spoil the peace of a gentle mind.”

THE DEATH OF JUDAS.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

After Jesus was taken a prisoner in the garden, Judas was pushed aside by the priests, for he was of no more use to them. No longer praised and talked to, not even noticed, he followed, as one of the crowd into Jerusalem, to see where they would take Jesus to. From the house of Annas, he went to Caiaphas's palace, and there he saw Peter and John, and kept out of their way ; and when he heard that Jesus was to be tried in the night-time, and that witnesses had been sent for, he was surprised and felt uneasy. While the trial was going on, he waited in the palace-yard below to hear the result, and as he stood there, he heard himself called the false disciple who had betrayed his Master, and began to feel uncomfortable and wish that he had not done it. He saw Jesus, with His hands tied, led up the broad steps, between two guards ; and when some councillors came out asking eagerly for witnesses, he would not go as one. He next heard that no more witnesses were needed, and there was a long pause. He then saw the white figure of Jesus coming down the broad steps again, and what ! the guards were striking Him ! and the word “ Death ! ” seemed to hiss through the air. A cold sweat broke out on his brow, as he heard some one distinctly say that Jesus had been condemned to death. He watched them take Jesus across the palace-yard to the guard-room, and peering in at the ruddy door, saw his young Master, pale and silent, being buffeted and spat upon by the brutal guards. This was indeed, too bad ! but he felt certain that the larger council would never confirm

the spiteful sentence of Caiaphas. In the grey light of dawn he saw Jesus go up into the palace again, then there was a dreadful half-hour of suspense, and again he saw Him coming down the great white marble steps, with the golden sunlight falling softly upon His brown hair and white robe, and again, "Death! death! death!" seemed hissing in the air. He made rapid inquiry, and found that the priests had condemned Jesus again, and were going to take Him at once to Pilate to have Him killed. Then Judas grew alarmed. He could no longer deceive himself into the belief that all was safe, that the priests would not, and could not, kill Jesus. "These cruel men will do anything," he thought, "after such an outrageous trial;" and a wild desire came over him to have this shameful injustice stopped. He believed all the people knew, as he did, that Jesus was innocent of any crime. Now he realised what he had done in putting Him into the power of these wicked men; and he resolved at all risks to undo the share he had taken in this terrible night's work, and, if possible, by declaring the innocence of his young Master to save His life.

From Caiaphas's palace Judas ran down to the Temple, where he asked to see the men with whom, in his anger, he had made the bargain to betray Jesus. Not finding them at once he went in to look for them, going from court to court of the Temple, until he got as far as he dared go; and seeing some of the priests whom he sought, in the Priests' court within, he called to them. With wild eyes he told them what was being done to Jesus, who was innocent, that Caiaphas had condemned him to death, and he asked them to take back their thirty pieces of silver, holding them out in his hand, while he implored them to help him to undo the mischief he had done, as he exclaimed—

"I have been wicked! because I have betrayed the innocent One." The priests looked coldly at him as he stood holding out the money at the edge of their court, past which it was death for him to go. But his haunted looks and imploring words could not move these calm, cruel men. What

Judas had done, whether bad or good, was nothing to them, and keeping him at a distance, they answered coldly—

“What doth that matter to us? See to it thyself.” And with a gesture to be gone, they turned away. Judas had served their turn, and might perish now for aught they cared. But Judas would not go. Tortured by the thought of what he had done, and their refusal to help him to save Jesus, he became reckless. What was life to him now? He hated these priests in their white linen dresses and broad hats, and raising the money aloft in his hand, he hurled it with all his force after them as they walked away towards the awful Holy place, and it fell jingling and clashing on the rich marble pavement with a loud jarring sound that echoed through the silence of the court; and, turning, he fled from the Temple. Hated by his old companions the disciples, hated by the priests, despised by the people, Judas could not bear to think of his young Master being slowly killed and he powerless to save or help Him, and getting a rope, he crossed the deep, gloomy vale of Hinnom, and among black and jagged rocks, from the branch of a low tree, he hanged himself that very day, and was dead before Jesus.

The priests in the Temple thought it better to take no notice of this confession of his guilt by Judas, and they allowed him to escape, while they gathered up the silver coins. But what should they do with the money? Some said they should put it back into the Temple money-box whence it was taken, but others said no, because it was the price of Jesus' life. And these very righteous hypocrites, who could take the money out to bribe Judas, would not put it in again, and resolved rather to buy, from a Potter, a piece of ground which they wanted as a burying place for strangers.

And such, my child, is the awfulness of remorse. Judas tried to stop the consequences of his wicked act, but alas! the power had passed into other and crueller hands, and all the sorrow that his heart could hold, would not move these cold priests to mercy. And so Judas died, the tool of wicked, cruel men, for in the end his love for Jesus had returned.

BEFORE PILATE.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It was now past six o'clock in the morning, and the courtyard of Caiaphas's palace was in a stir, for a strong guard was preparing to take Jesus to Pilate. Pilate was the Roman governor over the whole country, who usually lived at the gay Roman town of Cæsarea by the side of the blue Mediterranean sea, but at the Passover Festival he came up over the hills of Samaria with a number of soldiers to keep order in the crowded city, and lived in the finest palace in Jerusalem, built by King Herod on the top of Mount Zion, with rich gardens within its walls, and three strong towers of defence. He was a haughty man, who despised the Jews and all their ways, but the subtle priests understood him, for he hated clamour and noise, and feared his master, the Emperor Cæsar. Once he had brought the standards of the Roman soldiers into Jerusalem—silver eagles on the top of poles, and would not take them away; but the Jews had surrounded his house at Cæsarea in thousands, yelling incessantly for six days and six nights, till at last he had to yield to them and take the standards out of the city. At another time he hung up golden shields on the walls of his palace on Mount Zion, with the Emperor Cæsar's and his name upon them, and would not remove them till the Jews wrote to the Emperor complaining, and Pilate had to take them down. At another time he took some of the Temple treasury money to build a water-course into the city, but the people, stirred up by the priests, again yelled in crowds round his palace, till he had to put the Temple money back again; so that the cunning priests knew how to deal with Pilate.

His palace in Jerusalem was called "The Prætorium," which means, the chief place for soldiers. King Herod had lavished much money on its terraces, with carved pillars and arches, and on its floors laid with different coloured marbles, while the roofs of the large halls were so richly gilded as to

look like solid gold. Joined to it was the Hall of Judgment, where the king or governor heard cases, with a door that led out to a raised place called the "Pavement," on account of the different coloured stones with which it was paved, where, under a shade and overlooking the great city, stood a white ivory judgment-seat, on which the Governor sat to hear cases in the open air ; for it was a Roman rule that justice was open to everyone.

The morning sun was kindling with early splendour on the golden roof of the Temple, when, bound and surrounded by guards, Jesus was led out from Caiaphas's palace gardens up the steep and winding streets of the upper city to Pilate's palace on the top of Mount Zion. Many of the chief priests and Lawyers of the great council went with the guards to accuse Him before Pilate, as they had arranged. And also in that crowd were the mother of Jesus and Martha and Mary of Bethany, and other women, who wept and cried as they saw Him coming out to the street guarded and with His hands tied, and who followed weeping, with such of the disciples as were not afraid to come into the city. When the guards reached the grounds round Pilate's palace, they went in by the gateway, and a message was sent to Pilate, who replied by telling them to bring Jesus into the judgment hall, and the guards did so. Now Pilate was a Roman judge, and was answerable to the Emperor Cæsar that no one should be put to death in Jerusalem without open enquiry, and sitting down in the judge's seat, he asked the usual questions. The first was that the accusers of Jesus should come forward and state their accusation against Him, that he might consider it. But the guards replied that His accusers, the priests, would not come into Pilate's judgment hall during the Passover Festival week, lest they should be made impure and unfit for the great services in the Temple. They thought there might be some leaven left in Pilate's palace, and that, they said, would defile them, and they believed they were keeping themselves pure and clean by remaining outside in the open air. With a frown, Pilate sent word to the priests to meet him at the

Pavement. And the priests led the people round to that part of the palace, ranging themselves so as to be near Pilate when he came out, and thither the guards took Jesus also.

After a little, Pilate came out by the door from the palace, with stern face and short black hair, and wearing a white cloak, embroidered with a broad purple border; and he sat down on his white ivory chair that had been carried out and placed upon the raised Pavement, while Roman soldiers kept the people back with their long spears.

“What accusation do you bring against this Man?” asked Pilate bluntly of the priests, and they thought he seemed cross.

“If He were not an evil-doer we should not have delivered Him up to thee,” said one of the old Lawyers gravely. “Evil-doer! priests!” thought Pilate; and, guessing that it was some religious dispute arising out of the Passover Festival, which he cared nothing about, and would never understand, and that probably all they wanted was power to give Jesus some sharp punishment, he said—

“Take Him away, and judge Him by your own law.” And Pilate was about to rise and go into the palace again, when he was stopped by the reply from one of the councillors—

“It is not lawful,” he said, “for us to put any one to death.”

“Death!” thought Pilate; “this is a more serious matter.” And he sat and listened while the priests began to accuse Jesus of many things.

“He is a blasphemer,” they said. But Pilate smiled grimly. He thought nothing of that, and they went on to say—“We have found Him taking away the obedience of our nation from Rome, and telling the people not to pay tribute-money to the Emperor Cæsar, and saying that He Himself is the Christ, a King.” Now Pilate already knew all about Jesus and the crowds that followed Him, and how much was false of what the priests now said. He may even have seen Jesus at the Lake-side on his way to the fashionable town of Cæsarea-Philippi near Hermon. He knew that Jesus spoke openly

against the priests, and that the Pharisees hated Him. He knew that only a week ago He had offended the priests and the rulers by ordering all the traders out of the Temple. He had heard, also, that Jesus could do wonders, and was a good man ; and his wife, too, had sometimes spoken about Him. Most important of all, he had made inquiry for himself among the people, as was his duty, and was satisfied that Jesus of Nazareth was not plotting against the Roman power.

Rising in silence from his seat, Pilate went into the judgment hall, and ordered a Roman soldier to bring Jesus to him. With His hands free, now that He was in Roman custody, pale and haggard with the cruelties of the night, His soiled white tunic in sad contrast to the magnificent hall of marble and gold, the pride of Jewish kings, but with a calm look in His face that won the respect of Pilate, Jesus stood before him, a sad, a touching sight.

“Art Thou the King of the Jews ?” Pilate asked when they were alone, with a slight touch of scorn as he looked at Jesus in His simple peasant’s dress.

“Dost thou ask this thyself ; or did others tell it thee of Me ?” Jesus replied, looking calmly at Pilate.

“Am I a *Jew* ?” exclaimed Pilate, scornfully, meaning that personally he took no interest in the matter ; adding, “Thy own people and the chiefs of the priests have delivered Thee up to me to be punished. What hast Thou done ?” Evidently Pilate did not believe what the priests had told him at the Pavement outside.

“My Kingdom,” said Jesus wearily, “is not of this world. If it were of this world, then My followers would fight for Me that I should not be delivered up to the Judæans. But My Kingdom is not of this World.” Thus Jesus spoke in weariness and sorrow of that Kingdom of Heaven among men, of which He had spoken so often to the people. Pilate thought He was a religious enthusiast—a dreamer—and asked out of curiosity—

“Art Thou, then, a King ?”

“Thou sayest rightly,” Jesus replied, “because *I am a*

King. I came into the world and was born to be a Witness to the Truth, and every one that is of the Truth, listeneth to Me."

During this answer of Jesus, Pilate looked keenly at Him with brows knit. Jesus seemed to him to be a very remarkable but a harmless Person who did no wrong, claiming only to be the King of Truth-seekers. "Truth!" thought Pilate, "He little knows of the great men of Rome who have tried, and have failed to fix the meaning of that little word."

"What is truth?" he said to Jesus as he rose and left Him, to go out again to the people at the Pavement. There was silence when Pilate came out and sat down on his ivory seat.

"I find no fault in this Man," he said in a loud voice to the priests. "I find no crime in Him." But before he could say more, a clamour of tongues arose of Priests, Lawyers, Temple Traders, followers, crying out against what Pilate had said. When the noise grew less, some one shouted to him—

"He stirreth up the people, teaching through all Judæa, from Galilee to Jerusalem." Pilate kept a grim silence till they were done shouting, and then asked, with a quick glance at the priests—

"Is He from Galilee?" And when they answered "Yes," he quietly made up his mind what he would do. He would rid himself at once of this mob and of Jesus, by sending Him to Antipas, King of Galilee, who was then in Jerusalem, for him to try the case. Now King Antipas hated Pilate, and they had quarrelled, but Pilate thought that by thus giving him power to try one of his own people in Jerusalem, he would please the King, and make him his friend again. And amid the grumblings of the priests, Pilate told them firmly that he would send Jesus to King Antipas, to be tried by him, and that they must go thither. And he retired into his splendid palace again.

And thou, my child, wilt learn from this not to avoid thy duty, for it was Pilate's duty to make inquiry and see justice done, and help the innocent; and it showed a weak and

bad mind, when, believing Jesus to be innocent, he sent Him away to another judge, just as a compliment, and to save himself trouble.

MOCKED BY KING ANTIPAS.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Once more a guard of soldiers was formed round Jesus, this time armed with brass helmets, short swords and spears, that glittered and flashed in the morning sunlight, for they were Roman soldiers who took Him from Pilate to King Antipas. And again the weeping women saw Jesus, coming out of the gate of Pilate's palace gardens, but noticed that His hands were free. They followed Him to the old palace of the Maccabæans, which was not far away, also on Zion hill, and there they saw Him taken into the courtyard, and the priests, His accusers, this time went in also, for it was the palace of a Jew. King Antipas had come up to the Festival, and lived in this old palace when in Jerusalem. When Pilate's message was given to him he was pleased that he had given him power to judge one of his own people, and he was specially pleased that the Prisoner was Jesus, for he had long wished to see Him, and expected He would work some wonder before him. When in Galilee, he had sent word for Jesus to come to him, but Jesus had refused. This was also the king whom Jesus had called a fox, the wretch who had ordered John the Baptist to be killed to please a dancing-girl—surely not the man to sit in judgment upon Jesus !

King Antipas, in a richly embroidered robe, sat with his chief men round him, while Jesus, pale and wearied, was brought in to be tried—tried for the fourth time in six hours. The king was surprised at His appearance, and gazed at Jesus with wonder and satisfaction, as he explained that Pilate had sent Him to be tried by him as king of Galilee, with full powers. He then asked the priests what they had to say against Jesus, and they replied by accusing Him of breaking the laws of their religion and of the Temple, of

stirring up the people against the Romans, and of everything else they could think of that would influence King Antipas, adding that their great council had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy. They hoped to get the king to sanction His death at once.

But King Antipas was struck with the silence of Jesus. He had never seen a prisoner who did not deny what his accusers said. Stopping the priests, he asked Jesus a question about what they were saying against Him, and waited for an answer. But Jesus remained silent. The king spoke to Him again and again, asking Him many questions, but Jesus would answer nothing. Then the king flew into a passion of anger, and began to threaten Jesus with punishment, and to call Him names and mock Him, while the priests clamoured for him to sentence Jesus to death. But King Antipas saw that he could do nothing in such a case, and resolved to treat the whole thing as one of Pilate's practical jokes. Pilate had sent him a man to try, who would not speak. He had heard Jesus called a "King," and that He had spoken of His Kingdom of Heaven among men, and he would send Him back to Pilate dressed up as a King, with no other message than that of mockery. He ordered his servants to bring one of his old purple robes and put it on Jesus, and they did so. And when he saw Jesus standing silent and weary, dressed in his cast-off finery, the king bowed low to Him, as though Jesus were a world's king, and laughed and spoke mockingly to Him, and then, ordering Him to be taken away back to Pilate, the king left the room.

Then the soldiers, imitating King Antipas, mocked Jesus also, pretending that He was a king, laughing at His sad wearied face, as He stood dressed in their master's old robe. And the priests felt that they had triumphed before King Antipas. And His friends in the crowd that stood at the gate saw Jesus coming out again from the palace of King Antipas, dressed in the purple robe of a mock king, to walk through the street back again to Pilate's

palace. The faded robe was intended to be a humorous message from King Antipas, and when Pilate saw Jesus so dressed, he thought he understood the king's joke, particularly when he was told that Jesus would not answer a single question that was asked Him, and Pilate and King Antipas after that became very good friends.

Do thou, my child, learn from this never to make sport of another's suffering. Jesus had spoken of His Kingdom of Heaven among men, and a paltry worldling thought it clever to make Him walk through the streets wearing a king's old robe. And thus, with a heart that could see nothing better than fine dressing and feasting and sport, King Antipas ridiculed a Sufferer whose greatness he could not comprehend.

PILATE FINDS NO FAULT.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

On His return from King Antipas, and while it was still early morning, Jesus was taken into Pilate's palace on Zion hill, that he might see Him with the king's old robe on. But the chief priests would not go in, and went round to the Pavement as before, to wait for Pilate to come out to them. Pilate now saw that he could not get rid of this troublesome affair, and must hear all that the priests and councillors had to say against Jesus, and decide what was to be done with Him. In a short time he came out again by the door on to the Pavement, looking in rather better temper, followed by Jesus, no longer wearing the purple robe, and in charge of a Roman soldier, who stood a little way off. Sitting down on the white judgment-seat, Pilate began to ask Jesus questions before the people, in the usual way when trying any matter.

"Art Thou the King of the Jews?" he asked in a loud voice, expecting Jesus again to speak of His Kingdom of Truth.

"Thou sayest it," Jesus answered. When the priests understood that the answer of Jesus meant "Yes," they

began to shout against Him, as they had done before King Antipas, accusing Him of everything they could think of that would influence Pilate. When they stopped, Pilate looked to Jesus to answer them, as was the custom, but He remained silent, and Pilate wondered.

"Hearest Thou how many things they say against Thee?" Pilate asked grimly. "Answerest Thou nothing?" He knew that the priests were telling lies. But Jesus would not speak, and as Pilate looked at His beautiful, pale face, he was astonished and could not understand it. Jesus was innocent, and yet He would not speak! What should he do? These priests would not be satisfied without some punishment. He would scourge Jesus to please His enemies, and then set Him free. Rising from his seat and speaking to the chief priests, he gave them his decision as a Roman judge.

"You have brought this Man to me," he said, "saying that He is one who stirreth up the people against the Roman power. I have examined Him before you and I find no fault in Him regarding the things of which you accuse Him. Neither did King Antipas find any fault, for he hath sent Him back to me. *He hath done nothing deserving death. I will therefore scourge Him and set Him free.*" These last words were received by the Priests, Lawyers, and Temple Traders with shouts of disappointment and rage, and Pilate, who should have left the Pavement at once, remained standing and irresolute. But other shouts were heard coming from the common people which attracted notice, and soon there were many voices calling for the Governor, as usual, to set free a prisoner whom they would name. Pilate, thinking that this cry had been got up by friends of Jesus, made a sign for silence, and turning to the common people, he said—

"You have a custom that I should set free a prisoner to you at the Passover Festival. Whom do you wish? Do you wish me to set free the King of the Jews"—for He knew that it was only the priests who through envy and hatred had brought Jesus to him that morning—"or do you wish Barabbas?" Now, Barabbas was a violent, bad man, who had got

up a rising of the people against the Romans, that ended in murder and robbery, and had been put into prison.

But a messenger came out quickly by the door to the Pavement, who wished to speak with Pilate as he sat there, and while he was speaking, the priests told their guards and servants to get the people, when the right time came, to shout for Barabbas to be set free. The message was from Claudia Procula, Pilate's wife. She knew about Jesus, and had heard of the guard going the night before to take Him a prisoner. The shouts of the people round the Pavement had come up to the palace windows, and on being told what was going on below, she sent this message to her husband—

“Have nothing to do with this good Man, for I have suffered much this day in a dream because of Him.” Pilate's face grew troubled as he listened to this warning, pressing message from his wife, for, like her, he had a half belief in dreams. If only to please her, he would set Jesus free, and he turned to the crowd again.

“Which of the two do you wish me to set free to you ?” he asked the people, for they seemed to have agreed upon some one.

“Barabbas !” answered a voice.

“What, then, shall I do with Jesus, who is called the Christ ?” Pilate foolishly asked, to which some one replied—

“Away with Him, and set free Barabbas !” Others cried, “Not this Man, but Barabbas ;” and a priest hissed through his teeth, “*Crucify Him !*” Pilate was astonished at this fresh demand, and began to argue with the crowd, which was now large.

“What then shall I do with Jesus the King of the Jews ?”

“Crucify Him ! Crucify Him !” the crowd replied, taking up the priest's cry. Now this was most revolting to Pilate's Roman sense of justice. There was no logic or fairness in this bawling crowd, and rising to his feet he continued to argue excitedly with them.

“Why,” he shouted in a loud voice that was heard above the noise, “what evil hath He done ? I have found nothing

in Him deserving death. *I will scourge Him and set Him free.*" But the judge who argues after pronouncing sentence, is lost. The Priests and the Temple Traders knew a better way to overcome Pilate than arguments. They continued to shout at the top of their voices, and stirred up the people to shout also—

"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and nothing but, "Crucify Him!" as loud as they could. And Pilate, looking anxiously down, saw a crowd of angry faces, and men with waving threatening arms, growing every moment fiercer, as they pressed against the pikes of the Roman soldiers, that kept them back, lest they should clutch at the robe of Jesus and drag Him off the Pavement. Jesus, too, looked down, but with no trace of fear in His face; although they did not cease to shout fiercely "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" as long as Pilate stood trying to speak to them. Should he order his soldiers to drive this wild mob out of his sight at the point of their long spears, Pilate thought? That would mean bloodshed, and would be reported to the Emperor Cæsar at Rome. Was one Man's life worth all this trouble? Pilate wavered and sat down, again the clamour of the people of Jerusalem had conquered him.

But there was still his wife. Her dream might be a message from their gods. He resolved to have nothing to do with the death of Jesus, and this is how he thought to clear himself. He ordered a basin of pure water to be brought out to him on the Pavement, and while a kneeling slave held it up, with much show he washed every bit of his large white hands before the people, who looked on in silence; and having wiped them dry with a towel, he said in a loud voice, pointing to Jesus, and holding up his clean hands—

"I am innocent of the death of this good Man. See you to it!"

"His death be on us, and on our children," the crowd replied defiantly. Then Pilate ordered his officer to set free Barabbas, and to scourge and crucify Jesus; and with a scowling face and mind full of anger and great doubt, he rose from

his ivory seat and went into the palace. The yells of the people had conquered him once more. And the priests and their followers shouted wildly as they saw Jesus taken away by the Roman soldiers, and again they shouted when Barabbas was brought out and set free.

And thou wilt learn from this how dangerous and foolish it is to deceive thyself. Pilate thought that with a few pints of water he could wash away the guilt of what he was doing; but he was only trying to deceive himself. He knew that it was his duty to do justly, and not to yield; and soon he felt the folly of this hand-washing show, for it gave him no peace of mind.

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

The women of Bethany were there that morning, watching what went on at the Pavement where Pilate pretended to be trying Jesus. Hope rose in their breasts when they heard him say that he would scourge Jesus and let Him go, but when he changed his mind, and they saw Jesus calm and pale, led away from their sight through the door into the judgment hall, to be scourged, perhaps killed! they could only weep and gaze in speechless horror at the cruelty of the men who were round Him. For, what had He done, but bless their children, heal their sick, and blame their wicked Teachers?

It was the Roman law that every one who was to be crucified should first be scourged. The prisoner, stripped to the waist, was tied to a post in a stooping position while a soldier scourged him, striking where he pleased, on head or body, with such force that many fainted and some died under the scourging. The scourge was made of strips of leather tipped with bits of lead or ragged bone. It was usual for the judge who had condemned the prisoner, to see the scourging done, so that Pilate would be there while Jesus was tied to a post in the open palace-yard and a soldier scourged Him with cruel

thongs until the red blood trickled to the ground. But Jesus bore the bitter pain in silence.

To the Roman soldiers, a man condemned to die, and particularly a Jew, was an object for ridicule and brutality. They thought it mattered little what was done to one whose life was to be taken away. There were five hundred Roman soldiers about Pilate's palace—mostly Syrians who had joined the Roman service. Some of them had seen Jesus dressed in King Antipas's old robes, and had laughed at Him ; and they resolved to have the play over again ; and all the soldiers gathered together in one of the halls of the Prætorium to have more soldiers' sport. His clothes were not given back to Jesus after He was scourged, but a Roman soldier's short scarlet cloak was thrown over His bleeding shoulders. Fainting with pain and exhaustion, He was led to a raised place and made to sit down in sight of all the men. Jesus had called Himself a King ! of a Kingdom that could not be seen ! There He sat with a scarlet robe on. But He had no crown ! And a soldier, cutting some long twigs from a jagged thorn that grew among the shrubs in the palace garden, taking care not to prick his fingers as he did so, twined the thorns into a round wreath large enough for a man's head. With much mock ceremony he came forward to Jesus and placed it with its sharp thorns upon His drooping head, amid the laughter of the other soldiers, who praised his cleverness, in thus crowning the King. But Jesus had no sceptre ! And another soldier cut a tall reed from a pond in the garden, and going up to Him put it into His open hand. Thus Jesus was dressed for the play. And, one after another, the soldiers came up before Him with grave faces, and kneeling on one knee, said in mock reverence—

“ Hail, King of the Jews ! ” and as each one rose and went away, the others laughed loudly, enjoying this ridicule of the bare idea of the Jews ever having a king, while Jesus sat there in silence, leaning for support, very sick, very faint and grieved, dimly seeing the men in that splendid hall as they came and went before Him like a strange, wild dream, and wishing it would

soon be all over. But again His silence irritated the soldiers, and first one and then another gave Him a blow with his hand as he rose from before Him. Others spat in His face after kneeling to Him. But most of them took the reed from His faint hand, and hit Him over the head with it, for they liked to see Jesus wince with silent pain as the thorns of the crown pierced His brow. And there, amid the blows, laughter, revelry, and devilry of these armed men-slayers, Jesus—the Friend of little children—sat, pale, bleeding, suffering, while, within hearing, the Roman carpenters hewed and hammered at the rough wooden cross on which He was to be nailed.

But Pilate's mind was ill at ease. It had changed again, although his hands were washed clean. Coming into the soldiers' hall, he saw Jesus, the Innocent, sitting there, blood-stained and fainting, looking such a picture of pathetic sadness, with His scarlet robe, His crown, His sceptre, while the soldiers called Him *King*, that Pilate thought if the crowd outside could only see Him now, they would cry out that He had been punished enough. Ordering the soldiers to stop their play, and bring Jesus after him, he walked into the judgment hall, and out again to the Pavement and the priests, who were waiting to see Jesus killed.

"See," said Pilate, "I have brought Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him," and he pointed to Jesus, who was brought forward between two soldiers, faint and stooping, with the crown of thorns and the scarlet robe still on. "*Look at the Man !*" Pilate said, that all might see what a Roman scourging had done to the strong young Galilean. The people were silent, but the priests and their servants raised the old cry—

"Crucify Him ! crucify Him !" they shouted, and Pilate again grew weak before such fierce blood-thirstiness.

"Take Him yourselves," he said, "and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him." But the priests dared not do that. They had no power, and they replied—

"We have a law against blasphemy, and by that law He ought to die, because *He calleth Himself the Son of God.*"

When Pilate heard this, he wished more than ever to have nothing to do with the death of Jesus, for he had heard of the sons of gods coming to the world, and he remembered his wife's dream. Rising from his ivory seat, he beckoned to the soldiers to bring Jesus after him into the judgment hall again.

"Where dost Thou come from?" he asked Jesus anxiously, as soon as they were alone inside. But Jesus remained silent.

"Why dost Thou not answer me?" Pilate demanded, adding in a threatening tone, "Knowest Thou not that I have power to set Thee free or to crucify Thee?"

"Thou wouldst have no power against Me," answered Jesus wearily, "unless it were given thee from above. The men that have given Me up to thee have done the greater wickedness." Pilate was so much impressed with the look and words of Jesus, that once more his mind altered, and he firmly resolved to set Him free. Going out to the Pavement again, he told the priests that he had resolved to set Jesus at liberty. But the priests knew their power, and hinted that if Pilate did this, they would bring the matter before his master, the Emperor Cæsar, at Rome.

"If thou settest this man free," they said, "thou art not Cæsar's friend; for whoever saith that He is a King, is against Cæsar." Pilate wavered yet again, as he recollected that Cæsar had already suspected his honesty, and might punish him if the Jews complained against him. But to call Jesus a "King" was, he thought, absurd, and ordering Jesus to be brought out, he pointed to Him as He stood, soiled, suffering, weak, saying with grim irony—

"Look at your King!"

"Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him!" yelled the priests and the people.

"Shall I crucify *your King?*" shouted Pilate above their voices.

"We have no King but Cæsar," replied the priests, as though fighting for the Roman Emperor against his own

Governor. Then Pilate finally gave up the struggle. He was no match for these crafty Jews. He had tried to put right the blunder he had made in ever condemning the innocent Jesus, but they had caught him in his own net. *Jesus must die.* And reluctantly he gave orders to his soldiers to carry out the terrible sentence of crucifixion. "After all," he thought, "it is the priests who are putting Him to death. I am only consenting." But he dared not look at the face of Jesus, as with eyes bent upon the ground he left the Pavement for the last time and went into the splendid palace, to the silence of his own thoughts.

And thou, my child, wilt remember the awfulness of giving way to cruelty, for men who do so know not when to stop. Some people have rejoiced to see men slaying each other in an amphitheatre ; others have made torches of living people tied to poles ; some love to see bulls killing horses ; others are against such things, but like for sport to shoot the timid deer upon the heathery moor,—but there is cruelty in it all.

DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM!

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Condemned to be crucified ! Jesus was taken away by the soldiers back to the yard of Pilate's palace, where His mock King's robe of scarlet and His crown of thorns were put away, and His own clothes given to Him. A Centurion of the Roman soldiers was ordered to carry out the crucifixion, and soon the nails, hammers, spades, ropes, food and water for the soldiers, and the terrible cross were ready. The cross was made of a rough log of wood, with a cross-bar near the top, and a thick wooden pin about the middle of it, for the sufferer to sit astride upon. A black board was also prepared to hang round the neck of Jesus, or to be carried through the streets in front of Him, on which His supposed crime was written in white letters. And Pilate told the officers to write this on it in three languages—Latin, Aramaic, and Greek.

"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

When all was ready, the soldiers, with brass helmets and spears glittering in the sunshine, were drawn up in the palace yard, with Jesus in their midst, specially guarded by four men, and when the cross, which He had to carry Himself, was laid upon the shoulders of the young Carpenter,—He who had carried many a load of wood,—it bent Him down till the end touched the ground. Beside Him were two thieves, miserable men, going to be crucified with Him, and who also had to carry their terrible crosses. And as the guard marched out into the sunny street, tears leapt afresh to the eyes of the women, when they saw Jesus with a heavy cross tied upon His shoulders surrounded with soldiers, and trying to keep up with them, and their cries of pity reached His ears, as with dizzy head bent down, He stumbled on.

Down the rough stone-paved streets of Zion hill they went, past palace gates and splendid houses, followed by a crowd of people attracted by the sight, while on the raised footpaths at the side of the street, walked the priests, holding up their long robes from defilement, determined to see Jesus die. From the upper city of palaces, they went down to the lower town of bazaars, shops, and poorer houses, for they were going out to the common place of execution beyond the walls, out by the gate on the opposite side of the city from the Galilean encampment on the Mount of Olives. And more people joined the crowd. But soon it was seen that Jesus was getting too weak to walk much further, for He was going slower and slower, struggling still to go the distance required, and the soldiers urged Him on, until, when near the Damascus Gate, He sank down upon the street under His heavy load. Just at that time, Simon, from Cyrenia, in Africa, a strong man, was coming in at the city gate, and seeing he was a stranger, the soldiers stopped him and bade him carry the cross for Jesus, which he did, partly from pity.

While they were standing there, voices in the crowd began to speak against the cruel treatment of Jesus, and loudest

among them were women who wept and lamented at the sight of His blood-stained face and tunic, His terrible weakness and sorrowful state—so young, so beautiful, so good, going to be crucified ! They were only women, but they were not afraid, as the men seemed to be, to cry out against the horrid cruelty of the priests, and all the way from Zion hill they had filled the streets with their wailing cries. That One who had done nothing but good in their city should be killed in this way, was a shameful thing which these women would cry against to the last, and above the shouts of the crowd, and the urging of the soldiers, Jesus heard the women's voices, and their cries were the only touch of pity which He received in that long terrible walk. Turning towards them His pale blood-stained face, with a look of sorrowful tenderness in His eyes, He exclaimed—

“ Daughters of Jerusalem ! weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time is coming when they will say that the women are blessed who have no children. And they will cry to the mountains to fall on them, and to the hills to cover them.” At the siege of Jerusalem, in later years, the Roman soldiers spared neither women nor children. And when the women heard this message of Jesus, they broke out into fresh weeping and wailing, and followed Him again, when the crowd started, out through the city gate and into the country.

The common place for crucifixions was a grassy mound, called Golgotha, or Calvary, at a little distance from the road into Jerusalem, where all the passers by might see the criminals hanging, and take warning. Leaving the road, the soldiers went over to this spot. Now it was the custom for the ladies of Jerusalem, out of kindness and pity, to make a drink for the prisoners, of wine and something like opium, which made the poor men feel dull and stupid, and which the women were allowed to give them before being crucified, that they might not feel the terrible pain so much. This cup was offered by some gentle hand to Jesus, and He took it, but when He tasted it, thirsty and weak as He was, He

would not drink. He wished to have a clear mind amid all His suffering, and did not fear the pain. And the women pitied Him the more, as they withdrew to a little distance, and stood weeping as they watched the dreadful preparations of the soldiers.

And thou wilt not forget how that when Jesus was deserted by His men friends, persecuted by the priests, howled at by the crowds, struck and mocked by soldiers, given up by Pilate, brave, gentle women did not cease, in the open streets of Jerusalem, to cry shame upon work which their hearts, with unerring truth, told them was wicked and unpardonable cruelty.

NAILED UPON THE CROSS.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It was between nine and ten o'clock in the morning when Jesus reached the place of crucifixion, and the sun was hot on Calvary. A ring of Roman soldiers, with glittering brass armour, was formed, to keep the people back. Within that ring lay the wooden crosses beside the prisoners, while with spades the soldiers dug three deep holes in the earth to set them in. When all was ready, the outer garments of Jesus were taken from Him, and He was laid upon His back on the rough wooden cross, with His arms outstretched along the bar, to which they were tied with ropes ; cruel nails were driven through His hands and His feet, nailing them firmly to the strong wood, and then, amid the cries of the pitying women, two soldiers on each side of the cross slowly raised it upright, with Jesus on it, and carrying it over, dropped the end into the hole in the ground with a torturing shock, and held it there while the earth was shovelled and packed and trodden firm around the foot of the cross to keep it standing.

"Father ! forgive them, for they know not what they do," Jesus groaned, as He looked at the hired soldiers at work below Him, His feet being only a few inches from the ground.

Thus was the purest Being that ever lived on earth crucified upon the bitter cross at the age of thirty-three ; the torture of His pierced hands and feet being intensified by the weight of His body, while the blood dropped slowly from them—the work of priests, councillors, and hired murderers. Awful must have been the sight, as His head turned from one side to another, in mute search for the faces of His friends in the hushed crowd which stood a little way off—silent, save for the wailing of the women, and the shouts and oaths of the soldiers. They did not kill Him at once ; but nailed Him there to die slowly of thirst, pain, and heartbreak. Well has it been written of this scene, by a loving woman's hand—

“ We may not know, we cannot tell
The pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.”

And by England's greatest poet—

“ Those blessed feet ;
Which, fourteen hundred years ago, were nail'd
For our advantage, on the bitter cross.”

Over His head was put the black board with these words on it—

“ THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

It was usual for the four soldiers who crucified the sufferer to have his clothing given to them, and sitting down on the dry grass before Jesus the soldiers divided His clothes amongst them until they came to His inner dress of fine white wool, which was all of one piece without any sewing in it—perhaps the work of His mother—and for it they drew lots and one of them got it untorn.

The two thieves were also crucified there, one upon each side of Jesus, and when the crosses were all raised up, the people came closer, and the vitriol-hearted priests, wagging their heads and spreading out their robes, strutted to and fro in front of

Jesus that His closing eyes might see their triumph. Again His silence annoyed them, and they began to jeer and to reproach Him, and of all the mockings of that terrible day this mocking of the dying Jesus was the most viperously cruel, as with poisonous tongues the priests levelled their triumph and His punishment at His drooping head.

"He saved others, let Him save Himself," said one.

"He called Himself King of the Jews. Let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe on Him," said another—adding a lie to a taunt.

"He trusted in God," said another, "let God save Him now, if He wisheth Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God,' and so also said some of the Lawyers and Elders of the people, while some of the crowd shouted—

"Ha ! Thou that wouldst destroy the Temple and build it in three days, save Thyself !"

"If Thou art the Son of God, come down from the cross," shouted another.

And some of the priests, when they saw the black board with its white writing placed over His head, were much displeased, and went away at once to Pilate to get it changed, saying—

"Write on it, not 'King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, I am King of the Jews.'"

"What I have written, I have written," answered Pilate, and he refused to change it. He was tired of these cruel priests. And their servants and guards, taking up the cries of their masters, mocked Jesus also, as He hung there silent, tortured, and dying in the fierce blaze of the sun. They offered Him vinegar to drink, to see if He would not speak, saying as they came up and read the writing over His head—

"If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself." And one of the thieves, perhaps thinking that Jesus was the cause of their being sooner put to death, exclaimed—

"Art Thou not the Christ? save Thyself and us." And though like cruel arrows piercing His breaking heart, Jesus heard all their bitter taunts, yet He remained silent.

"Dost not thou even fear God," exclaimed the other thief to his companion, who was still calling Jesus names, "seeing thou art in the same punishment as He? And we are punished rightly for what we have done, but this Man hath done nothing wrong." And turning his head, that his eyes might see Jesus, he said imploringly, "Remember me, when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Then the parched lips of Jesus moved again as He slowly replied—

"Truly I say to thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Heaven."

And thou, my child, wilt learn from this, the awful wickedness of taking away the life of any one. Nothing raises wicked passions in us more than sights of killing, whether by soldiers or by executioners ; and if thou bearest in mind the terrible cruelty of the death of Jesus, all thy life long thou wilt set thy face against taking away human life,—the sacred gift of God.

IT IS FINISHED !

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

It was about ten o'clock when Jesus was put upon the cross at Calvary, to hang unshaded in the hot April sun that burned from a cloudless blue sky, while the priests came in front of Him, to watch Him dying, and make sport of His agony. Nor did they spare Him, although His mother came near and stood at His feet, weeping with a breaking heart. At a distance stood a group of Galilean women, the faithful Mary Magdalene, Salome, Mary the wife of Cleopas, the gentle Mary and Martha from Bethany, and others from Jerusalem, who were weeping and watching also.

John is the only disciple who is mentioned as having been there, and the soldiers allowed him to stand at the foot of the cross and support Jesus's mother, now a widow, weeping, with pale sweet face. Jesus heard and knew His mother's voice, and amid all His anguish was sorry for her, and looking down at her and John, He faintly said these few words—

"Woman, see thy son, see thy mother!" giving her into

John's keeping. And ever after that she lived in John's house like mother and son. Hour after hour passed slowly by, the people looking on, women weeping, soldiers guarding, priests watching like vultures to the last ; and when twelve o'clock drew near, one of those rapid changes came over the sunny day which are not uncommon in that country in Spring. Black clouds, foreboding a storm, rolled up over the mountains and the blue sky. The sun loomed red through them until it was hidden in the grimy darkness, and then there was a brooding gloom over everything, with strange stillness and stifling heat. And the people were silent and afraid, as they looked up at the three crosses dimly seen against the horizon, and expected something to happen. But the hours passed slowly, and the clouds began to clear again ; until about three o'clock, when the people were startled by a loud voice which cried, in intense anguish—

“My God ! My God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me ?” It was Jesus crying in the gloom, crying to God in the language of His childhood, and in tones of bitterest grief. Why He cried thus, what He meant, we cannot tell ; but we can stand in awe, with bowed heads in the presence of such anguish and despair,—for it was for us He suffered.

“He calleth for Elijah from Heaven,” said some one, for His first two words, “Eli ! Eli !” sounded like “Elijah !” And a soldier took a sponge and, pouring some water and vinegar from his drinking-flask upon it, put it on the end of a reed, and holding it up pressed it to the parched lips of Jesus, and He drank a little of it.

“Let Him alone now,” said another. “Let us see if Elijah will come from Heaven to save Him.” And the people stood watching and waiting. But time passed slowly on, minute by minute, each bearing its load of agony, amid the depressing gloom of thunder-clouds and hot, windless silence, as though all nature were hushed, listening, waiting for the brooding storm to break. Again there was a movement among the soldiers round the cross, for Jesus had with difficulty asked for water, saying—

"I thirst!" and again a sponge of vinegar, on a hyssop reed, was pressed to His dying lips. Scarcely had it been lowered when a sudden cry—

"*It is finished!*" uttered loudly by Jesus, rang with startling force in the stillness, followed by these faint but no longer despairing words, as He looked up to Heaven—

"*Father, into Thy hands I give My Spirit!*" And He bowed His head. *Jesus was dead!* The people looked at each other in amazement. What! Dead! Dead so soon! But still the whisper went from lip to lip. *He is dead!* Dead, in six hours! Even the Roman officer who stood before the cross, and who had seen many a crucifixion, was astonished, and exclaimed—

"Surely this *was* a good man—the Son of God." And when He died, the trouble that seemed brooding in the darkened skies of that Spring day, smote the world in an earthquake that made the ground tremble under their feet, shaking graves open and rocks asunder; and in the Temple, the thick veil of purple and gold, sixty feet high, that hid the Holy of Holies from the eyes of men, was torn from top to bottom, showing the emptiness of the gold-walled chamber in which God was thought to dwell.

Jesus was dead! and in wonder and great doubt the people began to go away and leave the place, returning to their homes in the city, many of them in remorse and perplexity like wretched men, beating their breasts with their hands, as they thought that, perhaps, after all, it might be that they had helped to crucify Jesus, the Christ, the Hope of their nation!

How did He die so soon, when others have lived on for three days hanging on the dreadful cross? He was young—only thirty-three—strong, and had lived a temperate country life. How did He die so soon? He had something to bear greater far than the pain of His pierced hands and feet. The wickedness, the ingratitude, the cruelty of men,—the future of the world, pressed on His heart with agony inex-

pressible, and He died more of sorrow than of pain. The people went away, but the soldiers had to remain, for the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus were still hanging there in agony. And the women of Galilee remained also. The men might go back to the city to work, to eat, to forget, but they stayed on ; for some one had gone to beg for the loved One's body.

My child, I have told thee of the most awful thing that has happened in the world's history. That Jesus, the perfect One, should have been set upon by fiendish men, and, in the name of religion, killed by torture in our beautiful world, we cannot understand ; but we know why He let Himself be so slain, for He has told us it was, "*That He might draw all men unto Him.*"

HIS GRAVE IN THE GARDEN.

JERUSALEM, FRIDAY, APRIL, A.D. 34.

A short time before Jesus died, some more priests had gone to Pilate. The next day (which is our Saturday) was their Jewish Sabbath. It began at sunset on Friday evening, and it was a great day of services in the Temple, for it was the Passover Sabbath, and the priests said to Pilate that it would hurt their feelings and was against their rules, to have three bodies hanging on crosses almost within sight of the Temple, where they were rejoicing and worshipping God ; and they asked that Jesus and the two thieves should be put to death *at once*, that their bodies might be taken down and buried in the vale of Hinnom,—the valley of fire, before the Sabbath began. Yes, they were very anxious not to have their Sabbath rules broken ! Pilate, who wished to have no more trouble with them, gave orders that the three sufferers should be killed, in the usual way, which was by breaking their legs with heavy wooden clubs, the shock killing the exhausted man. This was accordingly done by the soldiers to the two thieves ; but, when they came to Jesus, He was already dead ; but, to make quite sure, a soldier

stabbed Jesus in the side with his spear, and blood and water came out ; but He showed no sign of life.

By this time, Joseph of Arimathæa (a place in Ephraim), a rich and good man, had also been to Pilate. He was a member of the great council that had condemned Jesus, and although he had not voted for His death, he had not opposed it ; but now that Jesus was dead, his conscience was roused. He was determined that His body should not be put into the black and smoking vale of Hinnom, in which all criminals were buried, and he begged Pilate to let him have the body that he might bury Jesus that evening before their Sabbath began. Pilate was pleased with Joseph's request ; but was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead, and as he could not trust to any friend of Jesus in such an important matter, he sent for the officer in charge of the crucifixion, who told him that it was quite true, then he gave orders that Joseph should have His body. Joseph then found Nicodemus, another friend of Jesus in the great council, and together they went to the shops and bought fine linen cloth to wrap the body in, and sweet myrrh and bitter aloes to prepare it, and hastened back to Calvary. The Galilean women were still there, but there were few other friends. The soldiers dug up the cross, and laid it gently on the ground, and carefully drawing the nails from the feet and hands, and untying the cords, the body of Jesus was tenderly taken from the rough wood and laid upon a light piece of basket-work, and His friends carried Him sorrowfully away.

Now Joseph had a large garden a little way from the city and close to Calvary, beautiful with flowers, grass, and rare trees, kept by a gardener ; and like most rich men, he had caused a burying-place to be made for himself and his family, among the roses in a quiet part of that garden. It was a cave cut out of the soft white rock, with a small entrance, and a large chamber within ; and it was new, no one having yet been buried in it. From the green mount of Calvary to this quiet and beautiful place the friends of Jesus carried His body, and few were the feet that followed Him in death, though many

had crowded after Him in life ; but among them were two of the women of Galilee—Mary, the sister of His mother (who had been taken home by John), and the faithful Mary Magdalene. With footsteps treading softly upon the daisied grass, through the bright flowers and the scented shrubs, under the whispering leaves, with flakes and shafts of evening sunlight falling round them like benisons from Heaven, they bore the beautiful, the blood-stained body of their Friend and Master to the loveliest spot in the corner of that garden. And Joseph and Nicodemus, hastily sprinkling the linen cloths with their spicy mixture, wrapped the body of Jesus in them, and laid Him tenderly down within the chamber of that cave, there to rest in darkness and in silence, safe from all His enemies, until the Saturday should be over, when they would return again. Coming out again they took the large, flat stone that was at the opening, and rolled it up to the mouth of the grave, and by that time the setting sun was burning and glittering through the trees, for the Jewish Sabbath had nearly begun. And the women who had sat weeping at a distance, noting the place where the men had laid Jesus, rose and went away, intending to prepare spices and return on the Sabbath and dress His body properly, as it was the custom for women to do, for careful burial in the Jewish manner, and for which there was no time that evening. Who can picture the feelings of these few men and loving women, as they left the still garden, with the shadows of that sorrowful night falling round them ! For Jesus lay dead, and all their hopes seemed scattered like a dream. Thus ended the day which men call “ Good Friday.”

Next day (which was our Saturday, but the Jewish Sabbath), hearing that Joseph and Nicodemus, two of their own council, had buried Jesus, the priests held a short meeting, and, fearing some trick, they resolved to fasten the body of Jesus into the grave for safety, at least until three days had gone by ; and going with the Pharisees to Pilate, they sent him this message, for they said they were too pure to go into his palace—

“ Sir, we remember that Jesus, the deceiver, said, while He

was alive, that after three days He would rise again. Command, therefore, that His grave be made secure until the third day, lest His friends come and steal His body away, and tell the people that He is risen from the dead ; when the last error would be worse than the first."

"Take a guard of soldiers, and go away and make it as secure as you can," was Pilate's short message back. And again the strange sight was seen of Roman soldiers and head priests entering a beautiful, peaceful garden ; but now they sought not the place of the living, but the grave of the dead. And it was the Jewish Sabbath day when they did this thing. They found the stone there, closing the mouth of the grave, and in order to seal Jesus in, they fastened the stone, perhaps with clay round the edges, perhaps with a feeble string stretched across it, sealed at each end with a priest's finger ring ; and then they went away to their priestly duties at the Golden Temple, for it was a high day with them, leaving Roman soldiers to watch by night and by day that no one should touch the stone. And as the soldiers paced to and fro on guard, with their armour on and their weapons at hand, their footsteps echoed in the silent hollow of the dark cave where the body of Jesus lay.

The kindness of Joseph is like a shaft of light at this time. It was no small thing for him to face the anger and the jeers of his rich friends for being kind to the body of Jesus. To touch a dead person would prevent him, as impure, from joining in the Passover Festivals for the week, and to have a criminal buried in his garden would be called a disgrace ; yet Nicodemus did not hesitate. And thou wilt learn, like him, to do what is right when thy duty is made plain to thee, letting them jeer who will.

JESUS DEAD !

JERUSALEM, SABBATH, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Jesus dead ! The news spread dismay among His disciples, and there was not one who believed He would ever rise again. They hoped He would have been the Saviour of the nation,

and found a great Kingdom of cities, armies, and soldiers, but His power seemed to be at an end. Their dream of a splendid kingdom, money, and power was scattered by His death, and they thought He would henceforth be remembered only as a singularly pure young Man of God who worked wonders, and spoke things which people could not understand, and who through envy was crucified by the priests without resistance. If He had only done as His disciples wished, how different things might have been, they thought! There was nothing left for them now but to go back to their boats and their nets, their tools, gardens, fields, and try to live the good life which He had pictured to them, telling their children of the rare and gentle One whom they had followed for a while until He was killed.

This Jewish Sabbath was kept by the priests in Jerusalem with extra high and joyful ceremony in the Golden Temple, with changing of rich dresses, trumpet-blowing, chorus-singing, incense-burning, and altar fires. The old Teachers could speak as they liked now in the beautiful marble porches, without fear of interruption, for the young Galilean who used to teach there in His simple white tunic, lay cold and still in the hollow cave in the beautiful rose garden, securely sealed in. But how was it with the friends of Jesus? The Galilean women, gifted by nature with greater constancy than the men, spent the long sad day in preparing spices and ointments and linen with which to dress His gentle body for regular Jewish burial on the morrow. His disciples said, Jesus would never rise again, but despite His terrible death and awful lying in the grave, something made the women hope and feel that the dawning of to-morrow would bring new things. And chief among these believing, loving women was the beautiful Mary Magdalene.

Saturday, which was their Jewish Sabbath, went slowly past, and all through the cold, dark night the Roman soldiers watched the grave by the light of a large fire, and when morning drew near, they looked towards the dark hills of Moab for the first signs of the coming day. Sud-

denly, a little before the dawn, an earthquake shook the ground, and an angel with shining raiment passed through the men. Going towards the grave he rolled the great stone away from its opening, and sat down on it to wait. He was like a beautiful youth, and when he turned his face towards the soldiers it shone like lightning, and his raiment was dazzling as snow, and they were so afraid, that they fell down and lay with their faces to the ground. When they recovered from their fright and looked up again, the grave was empty. Jesus and the angel were gone. And rising in haste, the soldiers fled into the city.

While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene had timidly left her house in Jerusalem, and hastening along the silent streets had found her way alone into the star-lit garden, for she was determined to be the first at the grave with her spices and ointments. She heard the drowsy challenge of the blackbird as he awoke in the yew tree. Her feet brushed the glittering dewdrops from the wild flowers as she hastened over the grass, for the night was passing away, and the silver streaks of the dawn were shining along the skies when she reached the beautiful part of Joseph's garden where the grave was,—but her heart stopped with horror. The grave was open!—empty! deserted!—the guards were gone. And while she stood waiting there, and not knowing what to do, Mary, Joanna, Salome, and other Galilean women came, also bringing spices and ointments; and they went into the grave, and were astonished to find that the body of Jesus was away. Then Mary Magdalene, who was young and strong, fled away from the garden to the house in the city, where Peter and John lived, to tell them what had happened, and as she ran, the golden dawn of a new and glorious day spread kindling over the heavens, until the shadows fled, and radiant clouds hung bosomed with crimson above her,—a day which has ever since been called our *Sabbath*.

“They have taken away the Lord out of the grave, and we do not know where they have laid Him,” she exclaimed with panting breath, to the two astonished disciples, who

sprang to their feet at once and ran to Joseph's garden as fast as they could, and Mary followed them back again.

Now while she was away, and as the Galilean women waited near the open grave in the garden, sweet with the dewy fragrance of the roses, suddenly two angels stood beside them, with dazzling robes, and the women hid their faces in fear, and heard one of them say—

“Be not amazed! Be not afraid! I know that you seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. *He is not here: He is risen!* Remember what He said while He was in Galilee with you. That He would be given into the hands of cruel men, and be crucified, and on the third day ~~would~~ rise again. Come and see where the Lord lay,” pointing to that part of the cave where Joseph and Nicodemus had tenderly laid His body. The trembling women went into the large dim chamber and looked. “Go quickly,” the angel continued, “and tell His disciples and Peter that He is risen from the dead, and will go into Galilee before you, where you shall see Him as He said. Now I have told you.”

And the women hastened away from the grave to tell the disciples the joyful message; and as they went they tried to recollect what Jesus had said about rising again. And this was Sabbath, the morning of the third day after His death, for he died on Friday afternoon.

In the meantime John and Peter were hastening out from the city, and John, who was the younger man, ran faster than Peter, and came first to the open grave in the garden; and bending down he looked in, and saw the pieces of linen cloth lying which Joseph had brought, but the body of Jesus was gone; and he was afraid to go in. But when Peter came, he went in at once through the low door and into the dim chamber, and John followed him. They looked at the pieces of blood-stained linen cloth which lay folded on one side, and thought it seemed as if Jesus had gone out alive, or why should the pieces of linen cloth be so taken off His body and left behind? Coming out into the sunshine again, they walked away back to their house together, wondering very much at what they had seen.

And thou wilt remember how the Jewish Monday became our Sabbath, and the great things which happened on that day so long ago, when from the sorrow of these faithful women there rose a glorious hope of life beyond the grave.

HE IS RISEN !

JERUSALEM, SABBATH, APRIL, A.D. 34.

Peter and John went back to the city, but Mary Magdalene waited behind in the garden. She could not leave the grave of Jesus until she knew what had become of Him whom she loved so much. Had He gone forth alive, or—dreadful thought!—had the priests taken away His body to bury it in the smoking vale of Hinnom? And she went over and stood beside the open grave among the roses, that hung their green flowering streamers over the hard, grey rocks, and she wept bitterly,—faithful through death. But what could she do, a poor, despised woman from distant Galilee? Bending low down she looked again with tearful eyes into the dim cave, into which she feared to go, and instantly her sobs ceased, for she saw two angels sitting there in dazzling robes, the one at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had lain, and she started back with a cry of astonishment.

“Woman, why weepest thou?” asked one of them in a gentle voice. Mary hesitated; but her love for Jesus conquered her fears, and she answered from without the grave—

“Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” And having answered him, she burst again into tears, and as she turned away, she saw some One standing near, whom she took to be the gardener.

“Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?” He asked. Thinking that the gardener would be sure to know what had become of Jesus, she exclaimed in words of passionate entreaty—

“Sir, if thou hast carried Him out, tell me where thou hast laid Him, *and I will take Him away.*” She, with her poor

woman's strength, would carry the dead body of Jesus to a place of safety, if only he would tell her where to find Him ! The reply was but one word—

“ *Mary !* ” spoken in a tone that made the blood mount in crimson blushes to her face as, turning to Him, she exclaimed—

“ Rabboni ! ” for it was Jesus whom, in the language of their childhood, she called her “ Master.” And sinking down she would have clasped His feet with her hands.

“ Take not hold of Me,” Jesus said, “ for I have not yet gone up to My Father in Heaven, but go to My disciples and tell them that I shall go to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.” And He departed, leaving Mary alone amid the flowers and trees of that quiet garden, with a heart bursting with joy, for she was the first to see Jesus.

The news of the empty grave had now spread among His friends, and Mary, sister to the mother of Jesus, returning back to the garden, found Mary Magdalene there; and as they were walking together, Jesus appeared to them and said—

“ All hail ! ” which was a common manner of greeting ; and the women worshipped Him, and as they knelt down and clasped His feet, they heard Him say, “ Fear not ! Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and they shall see Me there.” And when Jesus was gone they rose and went into the city, to tell as many of their friends as they could. They found some of them in a house where they had met together to talk over what had happened, but they were all very much cast down, thinking that the body of Jesus had been stolen out of the grave ; and they would not believe Mary Magdalene and the other women when they came in and told them that they had seen Jesus, and angels, and gave them a message to go to Galilee. They said that their story was only women's foolish tales.

What did the Roman soldiers do who had fled at daybreak from that green garden ? They resolved to return to their quarters in the city, as though their watch were over at day-break, and to say nothing to their officers about the open grave. They would have been severely punished, and perhaps killed,

by the Governor Pilate, for failing to keep a proper guard had they told him what had happened. But they also thought that some of them should go and tell the priests who sealed the stone. And early that day they went to the priests and told them about the angel appearing, and about the body of Jesus being away when they recovered from their fear. Caiaphas, the High Priest, at once called together his small council of chief men, and sitting in private they talked over the strange story. Some of them would not believe it, thinking that the soldiers had been persuaded to let some friends of Jesus take away His body, and had made up this tale to deceive them ; but they decided that what they had said must not become known, and they resolved to give the soldiers money if they would tell a different story.

Calling in the men, they pretended not to believe their story, and perhaps threatened to tell Pilate, and said that if they would say to people that the disciples of Jesus came and took away His body while they were asleep, they would give them money to divide among themselves and their companions. But the soldiers replied that the punishment for sleeping while on guard was instant death ; and how could they say that Jesus had been taken away by His disciples, and also say that they were asleep at the time. But the priests told the soldiers never to mind that, and made light of their fears, and offered them more money, until it came to a very large sum, promising at last that if Pilate should come to hear of their made up story, they would get him not to punish them. Now the men in that council who offered bribes to these poorly paid soldiers were the richest and most powerful Jews in Jerusalem, and at last the soldiers took the money and promised to tell the required number of lies. And when the news began to be known throughout the city that the grave of Jesus was empty, the priests and the soldiers also spread their story that the disciples had stolen His body while the guard were asleep. And for years this story of the priests was commonly talked about and was believed by many people.

And thou wilt remember how Mary Magdalene stood weeping among the roses at the door of the empty grave, and heard Jesus speaking her name, and turning, called Him "Master." And may thou, too, hear Jesus calling thee, and turn to Him with all the love and worship of thy young heart.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS.

JERUSALEM, SABBATH, APRIL, A.D. 34.

And during all that long Sabbath, which was the Jewish Monday, the disciples and friends of Jesus were meeting with each other and talking over the strange rumours and stories of the day. It was reported that not only had Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women, but that He had also appeared to Peter, but we are not told whether it was in the garden. Two men also, Cleopas and his companion, said that He had appeared to them that afternoon in the following manner—

They were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a little country village about eight miles Westward over the Judean hills towards the sea. They were on their way home, thinking that the death of Jesus had put an end to all their hopes and plans, and as they walked they talked of all that had happened to Jesus, and whether He could be the Christ, and of the strange stories of the women, who said that He had appeared to them early that morning in Joseph's garden. While they were thus talking earnestly a young Stranger overtook them, and walked beside them, listening to what they said as they argued together.

"What are those sad things about which you talk with each other as you walk?" the Stranger asked, for He saw they were much cast down. They were surprised that, coming from Jerusalem, He should put such a question.

"Art Thou a stranger in Jerusalem," they asked, "that Thou knowest not what has happened there in these days?"

"What things?" was the simple question.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they both answered, "who was a Prophet, great in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers gave Him up to Pilate to be put to death; and they have crucified Him whom we thought was the Christ, and trusted should have saved the nation. Besides all this," continued the men earnestly, "this is the third day since it happened. Yes, and some of our women who were early at His grave this morning, came and amazed His friends by saying that His body was gone, and that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive; and some of us went to the grave and found it empty as the women had said, but we did not see Jesus." The two men did not believe the story of the women about the angels; and when they were done speaking, the Stranger replied in a way which showed that He did not see why they should doubt that Jesus was the Christ.

"Oh, foolish men!" He said, "and slow to believe after all that the prophets have said. According to them, ought not the Christ to suffer these very things which Jesus hath suffered, and enter into His glory?" The men were not able to answer, and as they walked on, the Stranger began at the first book of the Bible, and going through all the books, pointed out the things which applied to Jesus as the Christ, and which had been written many years before; and as they listened, they thought that He must be some great Teacher, and their hearts glowed with joy at what He said. They walked for two hours together, and the afternoon was far on before they reached the pretty village of Emmaus, with its white houses set upon a rising ground, in a district of orange and lemon groves and olive trees; and when they came to the low flat-roofed house where the men lived, they stopped, and the Stranger was about to bid them farewell and go further on, but they asked Him to come in, saying—

"Abide with us, for it is near evening, and the day is now far spent." The red sun sinking over the hills of Ephraim

told them that it would soon be dark, and the Stranger accepted their invitation and went into the house. When the evening meal was ready, they sat down at the table, and the Stranger, taking up the bread, blessed it, and breaking it, held it out to them. Something in His manner of doing this told the two men that He whose appearance was so different from that of their young Master before His death, was none other than Jesus Himself, — and instantly He vanished from their sight.

“Did not our hearts burn within us, as He talked with us by the way and explained the Bible?” they exclaimed ; and they wondered how it was that they did not know Him sooner. Hastily finishing their meal, Cleopas and his companion walked back again to Jerusalem, arriving there in the dark ; and they went at once to the house of their friends, and found a number of them still there.

“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Peter,” was the first thing they were told when they went in ; and then, amid hushed attention, they also told how Jesus had appeared to them, and what He had said. But the people who were in the house would not believe their story. And when they were done, they all remained together talking, with both the inner and outer doors closed, for fear of the priests, who had spread the report that they had stolen the body of Jesus. But the stories of all those who said they had seen Jesus that day were so strange, that there were some among His friends who refused to believe that He had been seen at all.

And thou, my child, wilt think of how Jesus was with these two men and taught them ; and wilt remember that, while thou canst never see Him, yet He will give thee views of truth and golden openings of heaven, in a companionship closer even than they had,—

“For though His face we cannot see,
Nor touch His human hand ;
He dwelleth with the pure in heart
Of every clime and land.”

BE NOT DOUBTFUL, BUT BELIEVING.

JERUSALEM, APRIL, A.D. 34.

As the friends of Jesus sat in that upper room, said to be in Mark's mother's house, on this first Sabbath evening after His death, they found much to talk about, for Jesus was reported to have appeared four different times to people that day, some of whom brought messages from Him, and all of whom had something strange to say of His appearance, and of His coming and going. All the disciples but Thomas were there, and there would also be the Galilean women, and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus from Bethany, Nicodemus, Cleopas, and Joseph, and they had the door securely shut, lest their meeting should become known to the Pharisees. Those to whom Jesus had appeared, firmly believed that He was risen, but those to whom He had not appeared said that the others had only had visions or had seen a ghost, and they would not believe ; for the dreadful spectacle of Jesus hanging dead upon the cross had crushed out all their hopes. With lights dim, so as not to attract notice, they sat talking on that Sabbath evening, and some of them were having a little food, when suddenly the form of Jesus appeared in their midst, and He saluted them in His old way, saying—

“Peace be to you.” But they all gazed at Him in silent terror and amazement, thinking they saw a ghost, for the doors were barred and the windows shut.

“Why are you troubled? Why do doubts rise in your minds? See,” He said, holding out His hands, which the cruel nails had pierced on the cross, “see My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me, and see ; for a ghost hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me have.” And He showed them His pierced hands and feet, and the wound in His side, which the soldier's spear had made. But yet some of the people there, out of very joy, could not believe that it was Jesus whom they saw, and continued to gaze at Him in wonder.

“Have you here anything to eat?” Jesus asked. And

some one gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honey-comb, which He ate. Then He upbraided His ten disciples for their want of faith and hardness of heart in not believing those who said they had seen Him, and by whom He had sent a message ; and He reminded them of how He had told them that He would be killed and would rise again, and, after speaking of other things, He said—

“ Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every one, and whoever believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be punished. Peace be with you. As God sent Me to teach, even so send I you.” And when He had said this, He breathed upon them, saying, “ Receive the Holy Spirit.” Then He vanished from their sight, and they were left wondering at what they had seen and heard.

After this the friends of Jesus did not at once go home to Galilee, but stayed on in Jerusalem for more than a week, meeting daily together in the same upper room, in Mark’s mother’s house, expecting to see Jesus again, and they told Thomas about Jesus appearing among them on the first Sabbath evening. But Thomas was an independent, strong-willed man, and He would not believe their stories. He thought that the teaching of Jesus was at an end, and with sorrow he had made up his mind to go back to the Lake of Gennesaret and his fishing-nets, and when the others pressed him to believe that Jesus was indeed risen, he replied—

“ Unless I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into them, and shall put my hand into the spear-wound in His side, I will not believe.” His strong nature had received such a shock from the death of Him whom he thought armies could not have conquered, that he demanded such proof as he believed would never be given. He came, however, to their meetings in the room above the street in Jerusalem. A week went past without Jesus being seen again by any one ; till one evening, as His followers were met together in the same room, with closed doors, suddenly Jesus stood in the midst of them, and said as before—

“Peace be to you,” and holding out His hands, He said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands, and thy hand, and put it into My side, and be not doubtful, but believing.” Thomas was filled with grief at those sad words; and the thought covered him with shame and confusion that, in moments of bitter hopelessness, he had spoken ever so lightly of his dear Master.

And he exclaimed in deep earnestness, “My Lord, and my God!”

“Because thou hast *seen* Me hast thou believed?” Jesus asked His strong-willed disciple, adding, as a gentle rebuke, “*Blessed are they who have not seen Me, and yet have believed.*” Meaning that it is but a weak trust and a narrow spirit that will not believe what it has not seen. And again Jesus departed from among them as strangely as He had come.

And thou, too, wilt remember the lesson given to Thomas, that they are greatly blessed who have faith in the unseen, but not unknown. Thou wilt meet with men who will deny this saying of Jesus, and tell thee to believe nothing that thou canst not see, but they may as well ask thee to believe that Jesus never lived, for the greatest things are those which we cannot see and yet believe,—wind, thought, heaven, life, spirit, Jesus, God,—all are unseen.

LOVEST THOU ME ?

LAKESIDE, APRIL, A.D. 34.

A few weeks have passed since the death of Jesus, and the scene is once more by the blue Lake of Gennesaret, amid the familiar green hills, and in the loveliest time of all the year—Spring—the time of wild flowers and blossoming fruit trees.

When the Passover Festival was over, the bands from Galilee walked home again to their villages among the green hills, spreading the news of the sad death of Jesus. And the disciples followed them, for they had been told that Jesus would meet them on a certain hill in Galilee, and until that day should come, Peter and some of the others went to their

homes by the Lakeside, and began again their trade of fishermen.

During the six weeks that followed that Sabbath morning when the grave of Jesus was found open and empty, we are told that He appeared and spoke to many of His disciples and friends, and showed Himself alive by many proofs. His appearing to James, to about five hundred people in one place in Galilee, to the disciples upon a hill there, to Peter and others on the shore of the Lake, and to the disciples again in Jerusalem, are specially mentioned. We are also told that He did many signs before them. Yet we are told there was always something so strange in His appearance, and in His coming and in His going again, that His friends sometimes failed at first to know that it was He, and many doubted if He were really risen in bodily form at all. But the faith of the eleven disciples grew stronger every day, and they began to hope again that Jesus would yet come to remain and establish a great kingdom upon the earth.

When the appointed day came, the disciples gathered to the hill in Galilee which Jesus had named, and which would not be far from the Lake of Gennesaret, and He appeared to them there, at first a little way off, and they worshipped Him, then coming towards them, He repeated some of the things which He had told them before, adding—

“All power hath been given to Me in Heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make followers of Me in all places, teaching them to do all the things that I have commanded you. Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” And after remaining a short time with them, He again departed from their sight. But even yet, some who were there, doubted whether they had seen their own dear Master, or only a vision, for they could not understand why He should come and go in this strange way. They were being taught to do without His presence, and to believe Him alive, though unseen. And from that hill the disciples went back again to their boats and their fishing at the Lake.

A few days later Peter, James, Thomas, John, Nathanael, and two others, had gone out in Peter's boat to fish all night, which was the usual time for fishing, and though they rowed up and down the Lake, putting out and taking in their nets, when the red dawn burned along the edges of the hills and began to lighten upon the water, they had caught nothing, and it was no use trying any longer. As they rowed to the land, the growing day was breaking over the purple hills of the Jaulan, and steeping the lake with rose and gold, and they saw a Stranger, whom they did not know, standing on the white shore by the water's edge, and He called to them—

"Children, have you anything to eat?" and when they answered "No," He replied—

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you shall find fish." The men stopped rowing. Perhaps He had seen fish moving there, and they quickly lowered their net once more, rowing round in a ring until it was hanging in a circle in the water, and when they began slowly to pull it in, they found it heavy with fish, and the truth flashed on John.

"It is the Lord!" he exclaimed. And when Peter heard John say this, he looked, and binding his fisherman's coat about him, for he was naked, having perhaps swum round with the net, he sprang into the water to swim to the shore, which was only a hundred yards off, and with swift strokes he was soon at the feet of the Stranger. The other men, getting into a little boat, rowed slowly towards the shore, dragging the full net after them, and when they came to the beach, they found a fire burning, with fish laid on it to cook, and bread to eat.

"Bring the fish which you have caught," the Stranger said, and the men pulled in the net, and shook out a hundred and fifty-three large fishes upon the pebbly beach. And they were surprised that their slender net was not broken.

"Come! break your fast—eat," the Stranger said, and taking the fish and the bread in His hands He broke them, and gave them to the hungry disciples. And while they

wished much to make certain who He was, yet none of them cared to ask Him, for they knew it was Jesus. After they had breakfasted, turning to Peter, Jesus said—

“Lovest thou Me more than these?” pointing to the other disciples.

“Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee,” Peter answered humbly.

“Feed My lambs!” was the reply, meaning, teach My followers. And after a pause He asked again, “Lovest thou Me much?” to which Peter replied anxiously—

“Yes, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee much.”

“Feed My sheep,” was the reply. After another pause, He said a third time, “Lovest thou Me very much?” Now Peter was deeply grieved that he was asked thus a third time, and he replied earnestly—

“Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.”

“Feed My sheep,” was again the reply. Had not Peter in the courtyard of Caiaphas’s palace three times denied that he even *knew* Jesus? But Jesus was not unkind, and looking on Peter’s troubled face, He added gently, “I tell thee, that when thou wast young, thou didst bind up thy robe and walk whither thou wouldest; but when thou art old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another one shall guide thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” This was a gentle rebuke for Peter’s fault of too much self-confidence.

“Follow Me,” said Jesus, and He turned and walked away from the Lake, and as they went, John walked behind, and Peter asked, pointing to John—

“Lord! and what shall this man do?”

“If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to thee?” was the reply. “Follow thou Me!” But the disciples did not know what Jesus meant by His answer, nor can we understand it; and soon after that He parted from them.

And thou, my child, canst ask thyself the question which Jesus asked the rough, warm-hearted Peter, “Lovest thou Jesus.” Peter had his faults, and so hast thou; but I think

that thou canst answer as truthfully as he—"Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," for to love Jesus is to love all that makes life good and beautiful and happy.

A CLOUD RECEIVED HIM.

JERUSALEM, MAY, A.D. 34.

It was early Summer, the trees were in thick green leaf, and wheat was waving in the fields when the disciples returned from Galilee to Jerusalem to live together in the same large upper room above the street, reached by a stone outside stair, in which they had lived before. They were now full of hope that Jesus would come again, and drive out all the enemies of their country, and live in the king's palace at Jerusalem, to remain with them, and establish His great kingdom of cities and armies on the earth.

We now come to His last appearance. It happened about six weeks after His death, and in the same strange manner as before. The disciples were all met together in the same upper room, in Jerusalem, and Jesus was again seen by them there, and spoke much to them. We are not told all that He said, but He reminded them of what He had said about His death, before it happened, saying—

These were the words which I told you while I was living with you, that everything must happen to Me that is written about the Christ in the Books of Moses, the Psalms, and the Old Prophets of the Bible. And then He explained the Bible to them, causing their minds to understand what they had not understood before, just as He had done to the two men on the Emmaus road, showing them the parts which applied to Him as the Christ, adding—For it is written there that the Christ should suffer death, and rise again from the grave on the third day; so that repentance and forgiveness should be afterwards taught in His name to all nations of the world, beginning first in Jerusalem. And you are the witnesses of these things—witnesses that I am Jesus the Christ, of whom the Bible speaketh. Then, speaking of the Spirit of Truth, which He had promised them, He added—Behold I shall

send the promise of My Father upon you, but you must remain in Jerusalem until you receive that promise from God. In a few days you will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

He then told them to follow Him, and led the way out of the city, over the bridge, past the dark olive grove of Gethsemane, and up to the Mount of Olives, by the Bethany road. Once more, from the other side of the deep, dark Kedron valley, they saw the splendid city outspread, with its great Temple of white and gold. The men knew that this was to be the last appearance of Jesus, and they wished to ask one question before He left them. In what year, on what day, would He return to the world to establish His great kingdom? For they still believed that He would drive out the Romans with soldiers, and give the Jews back their country, in which triumph they would all share, and they put this question—

“Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to the Jews?”

“It is not for you to know the times and seasons which God hath appointed,” was His only reply. And He told them of other things which they should think about. Of the Spirit, which would teach them that His Kingdom of Heaven was a Kingdom in the hearts of men, not a Kingdom of cities and soldiers. “You shall receive power,” He said, “when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses for Me, not only in Jerusalem, but also in Judæa and Samaria, and the furthest parts of the world.” Thus speaking of the long journeys which these disciples would go when spreading His message of Heaven.

Slowly they climbed the hill to the highest point of Olivet, from which they could see the splendid city of Jerusalem, and the spot beyond the Western wall where Jesus was killed. To their left hand they could trace the outline of the yellow Hebron hills towards Bethlehem, where thirty-three years ago He was born. And there upon His favourite place of retirement, a silent, wind-swept hill, under His feet the simple flower-strewn grass, over His head the fair blue sky with white clouds bending low, clouds cloven with the

snowy wings of angels, whose radiant faces looked down upon this the last scene of all, lifting up His hands He blessed the group of Galilean fishermen ; and while He yet spoke He was parted from them, and taken up into Heaven ; and as they looked, a cloud received Him out of their sight, and they worshipped there.

“ You men of Galilee,” said a voice beside them, “ why do you stand gazing up into the sky ? ” The men turned to the speaker, and were amazed to see two angels standing beside them, who continued, “ This Jesus, who hath been received up from you into Heaven, shall come in the same way as you have seen Him go.” This was their message, and the angels also departed. Then the eleven disciples returned into the city and to their friends whom they had left in the upper room, and told them what had happened, and that Jesus would appear no more.

The followers of Jesus waited on in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit in full measure, as they were told to do, and continued to meet in their large room day after day ; Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Judas, James the Less, Joseph, Nicodemus, Mark, Lazarus, Matthias, Cleopas, Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her sister Salome, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary, Joanna, and the brothers of Jesus and others who joined them, would all be there. And they continued together praying, and going daily to the Temple to praise and bless God ; and soon their numbers increased to over an hundred persons.

My child, thou wilt hear it said that the body of Jesus did not come to life again after His death, but that only His Spirit lived, and that these strange appearances to His friends were visions. Some even of those who saw Him would not believe that they saw Jesus ; and it is indeed true that He did not seem the same as before. But let not that disturb thy mind. The great truth remains, that the Spirit of Jesus lives after His death. And the effect upon His disciples was to change them from terrified

and despairing men to brave and confident teachers, such as the world had not seen. In thy thoughts about His life, thou wilt not fail to catch the golden thread of absolute spiritual truth which runs through it all; and, having that, thou canst afford to let alone many of the unexplainable things round which controversy so fruitlessly and harmfully wages.

PETER'S DEFENCE.

JERUSALEM, MAY, A.D. 34.

During the days that passed while the followers of Jesus waited in Jerusalem for the fuller gift of the Holy Spirit, Peter became the chief disciple, and did all he could to encourage the rest, as Jesus had told him to do. He thought they should appoint another disciple in the place of the dead Judas Iscariot, and so have twelve again; and at a meeting in Jerusalem, when there were one hundred and twenty persons present, so rapidly did others join them, Peter stood up, and having told them about Judas Iscariot, urged strongly that his place should be filled, saying—

“Of the men who have been with us all the time that Jesus went about among us, one must become a witness with us the other disciples, of His rising from the dead.” And the ten disciples agreed that this was right, and put forward two men, Joseph and Matthias, that Peter might choose one of them. And they prayed to Jesus, saying that He knew the hearts of all men, and asking which of them He wished. They then drew lots between the men, and the lot fell on Matthias, who became one of the twelve disciples. The upper room soon became too small for their meetings, and they went to a larger and more public place, where they met with open doors, for the cruel death of Jesus, instead of putting down His followers, had caused many secret friends to come publicly forward and join the disciples, and they no longer feared the priests, but met openly as followers of Jesus who had been crucified.

Another Festival came round, the Festival of Weeks, when

first fruits were offered in the Temple, and on a day in the end of May, called the Day of Pentecost, as these early Christians were met together in Jerusalem, in a large public room, which could easily be found, a strange thing happened. Suddenly there came a sound from the skies as of a storm of rushing wind and lightning, and it seemed to fill the place where they were sitting, and they saw what looked like flaming tongues of fire dividing up among them, and resting on each of them. And as they sat there in awe-struck silence, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and one after another they began to speak in strange tongues, and were full of great joy and enthusiasm, and praised and thanked God for His gift. Now there were in Jerusalem at that time many good Jews who had come to the Festival from foreign countries, and some of them were at this meeting, and when they heard the disciples speaking of Jesus and His death, they were surprised, and asked—

“Are not these men who speak all Galileans? And yet we hear them speaking of the mighty works of God each in our own language.” But other Jews of the city came, who disliked Jesus and His followers, and when they heard the disciples speaking of His death and rising again, they mocked at them, and said loudly to each other—

“These men are drunk with wine.” Perhaps they interrupted Peter, for he heard them, and, bold, now that he had received in fuller measure the Spirit of his Master, Peter stood up and calmly and in a loud voice, as the chief of the disciples, made his defence to these Jews of Jerusalem.

“You men of Judæa, and all who live in Jerusalem,” he said, “listen to my words, and let this be known. These men,” pointing as he spoke to the other disciples, “are not drunk, as you suppose.” Then at some length he proceeded to show from the Bible that this strange scene was the coming of the Holy Spirit of which the prophets had spoken; and he went on openly to accuse these Jews of Jerusalem of the most shameful cruelty in killing Jesus, saying—

“You men of this nation, hear these words. Jesus of

Nazareth, a man proved to be from God by the great works, wonders, and signs, which God did through Him among you, as you yourselves well know. Him you did crucify and kill by the hands of unlawful men. But God hath raised Him up again from the grave, because it was not possible that it should hold Him." And saying that King David wrote of Jesus in the 16th Psalm, Peter continued, "This very Jesus, God hath raised up, of which we all are witnesses," pointing as he spoke to those around him. "He therefore being raised to the right hand of God, and we having received from Him a promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath poured out this power upon us which you now see and hear." And Peter ended his speech, parts only of which I have given thee, with these solemn words, "Therefore let every house in the country know as a certainty, that God hath made both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified."

Thus did Peter, the fisherman of Galilee show, in that noble, fearless speech, that he was no longer the same kind of man who denied Jesus with oaths, but that by the influence of the Holy Spirit he was changed, and had a power guiding him to eloquence and truth such as he never had before. And as the people looked at him standing there in the rough clothing of a Galilean peasant, and heard his fearless eloquence and convincing reasoning, some of those city Jews felt pricked to the heart when they thought of the shameful death of Jesus not two months ago, and they asked the disciples, saying—

"Brothers, what shall we do?"

"Be sorry for your wickedness," Peter replied, speaking for all the others, "and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus the Christ unto forgiveness, and you also shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And now that they were beginning to be sorry, Peter went on to speak of the goodness of Jesus, and to urge them to leave their old Teachers, and join the Christians. And many who heard Peter that day believed his words and were baptized, and joined the disciples as followers of Jesus.

This was the first public teaching of the disciples after the death of Jesus of which we are told, and the bravery of Peter gave courage to them all. They now saw the error of their early training, in confounding material and spiritual things in connection with the Christ and His Kingdom. The long-mistaken dream of an earthly kingdom of cities, soldiers, riches, faded away as the reality of the higher Kingdom of Heaven among men, the kingdom of the Spirit, took hold of them. They served Jesus no longer in hope of rewards, of money, or of high positions. All such thoughts were gone for ever. They served Him now out of pure love for their dear Master, and His words. And, as the truth broke over them, they understood the true nobility of His lowly life, the deep beauty of His teaching, the true meaning of His sayings about Heaven and God, and their life was henceforth to be spent in spreading His truth, spreading God's Kingdom of Heaven in the world, and in getting men, women, and little children to believe in God and serve Him. They spoke so openly and fearlessly now, that before many months were gone three thousand persons joined the Christians, and followed their teaching, among whom were three hundred young priests from the Golden Temple in Jerusalem, who separated themselves from their false religious Teachers who had put Jesus to death.

And thus were the disciples rapidly changed from worldly, self-seeking men of very limited spiritual sight, to men of fearless courage and great self-denial, seeking the things of Heaven and God, with a knowledge of spiritual things such as they could never have learnt, but which was given them through Jesus.

And thou, my child, wilt remember that all true speaking of the words of Jesus is done under the direct guidance of God's Spirit, as Peter spoke. Not all theology, metaphysics, science, exposition, distilled together, can avail to teach without the Spirit, and having the Spirit, thou hast all.

PETER AND JOHN BEFORE CAIAPHAS.

JERUSALEM, JUNE, A.D. 34.

It is well for thee to know how fearlessly the disciples taught the people, and how the followers of Jesus increased and spread. Having become the chief of the disciples, Peter went every day with others to the Golden Temple, where he taught in the beautiful marble porches of the large outer court, as Jesus had done. And one day, as he and John were going up the great white steps at the Beautiful gate of the Temple to afternoon prayers, a beggar asked them for something. Peter replied to him in these noble words—

“Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have I give thee.” And taking him by the hand, he raised the beggar to his feet, and the man walked in with Peter through Solomon’s porch, praising God as he went, and the people wondered and came to look at him, and Peter said to them—

“You men of Israel, why do you wonder at this man, and look at us as though by our own power or goodness we have made him walk? God in this hath glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and accused before Pilate when Pilate wished to set Him free. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked that Barabbas, a murderer ! should be given to you, and so you killed the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, as we have seen. Faith in Jesus hath made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which is through Jesus, hath given him this perfect soundness in the sight of you all. And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance you killed Jesus, not knowing that you were fulfilling the prophecies in thus putting the Christ to death. Turn ! and repent of your wickedness, that you may be forgiven, and that there may come to you times of refreshing from God, and that He may send the Spirit of Jesus to you all.”

Peter said more, but he was being watched as he spoke, for the Priests and Sadducees were greatly concerned when they

heard Peter and John teaching the people that the dead would rise again. And they ordered the temple guards to take them both prisoners, and they were put into prison, but that only caused the people to believe the more what they had said about Jesus.

Next morning Caiaphas, the chief priest, again called his great council of priests and rulers together in his palace on Mount Zion, this time to try Peter and John, as they had tried Jesus before,—but not at midnight. In the day time they met, and Caiaphas sat on his crimson cushion, with Annas beside him, and his brothers Alexander and John, and all the chiefs of the priests and other councillors round him, and Peter and John were brought from the prison into the splendid hall, with their hands tied and in charge of the guards. The beggar was also brought in whom Peter had healed, that all might see him.

“By what power, or in what name have you done this thing?” asked Caiaphas, looking at them sternly. As Peter, the rugged fisherman, faced the cold proud murderer of his dear young Master, standing on the very spot where Jesus had stood not three months before, he was deeply moved, but not with fear—he felt the Holy Spirit within him moving him to speak, and looking boldly at Caiaphas, he replied—

“You rulers and elders of the people, if we are here this day to be examined about a good deed done to a lame man, and how he hath been made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people, that in the name of *Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ whom you crucified*, but whom God raised from the dead, doth this man stand before you whole,” and he pointed to the lame beggar, continuing, “And in none other than Jesus is there salvation; for there is no other name under Heaven, given among men, wherein we must be saved.”

When the council saw the boldness of the two men, openly telling their belief in Jesus in language truly wonderful for Galilean fishermen, they were much surprised, and noted that they had been with Jesus; and seeing the lame man there, they could not deny the healing. Caiaphas then ordered

them to be taken out again, that the council might talk together in private. And they were taken out.

“What shall we do with these men?” asked one councillor.

“That a wonderful thing hath been done through them is known to all Jerusalem,” said another, “and we cannot deny it.”

“That it may spread no further among the people,” said a third, “let us threaten them with punishment and order them to speak no more to any man, in the name of Jesus;” and this very moderate advice pleased the whole council. And calling back Peter and John, Caiaphas in a solemn voice told them their decision, that they would be punished if they spoke any more to the people about Jesus.

“Whether it is right before God,” answered Peter at once, “to obey you or to obey God, you can judge for yourselves; but we cannot do anything else than speak of the things which we have seen and heard of Jesus.” And thus they refused to obey the council. What was to be done? They defied these murderers of their dear young Master; and Caiaphas, being afraid to punish them because of the people, threatened them again, and set them free. How different from their treatment of Jesus! And Peter and John returned to their friends and told them all that Caiaphas had said, but though they were afraid, yet they continued to teach as openly as before.

And thus were the people taught about Jesus, by His brave disciples and friends. And, as months passed into years, not only did they teach in Jerusalem, but they went into Samaria, Judæa, and Galilee, and while the priests and rulers punished many of them, and killed others, still great men like Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, joined them and travelled into Rome, Athens, Italy, Greece, Macedonia, Egypt, and other countries and cities, spreading the knowledge of God and of His Kingdom of Heaven among men. And it is said that one of these early Teachers came even to England itself, but of that no one can be certain.

And thou, my child, wilt admire the courage of the fishermen, Peter and John, standing before those terrible men who

had killed Jesus, and speaking fearlessly the truth as the Spirit taught them,—the friends and defenders of Him whom their judges hated.

THE FINISHED PICTURE.

In the beautiful church of St Mark's at Venice, high over the main doorway, there is a large picture of Jesus sitting upon a throne, with His mother, and Mark standing beside Him. It is a wonderful picture, made of many pieces of coloured stone and glass,—red, blue, yellow, green,—shading into each other and fitting so closely together that the joinings cannot be seen, and the picture looks as if it had been painted with a brush upon a background of gold, and set in a frame of red marble. Through this door the young people come into the church, and as they enter they turn and look back upon the figure of Jesus shining and sparkling in gold above them, and read these words written upon the red marble fillet—“*Who He was, whence He came, . . . Do thou remember!*” And thou, my child, hast heard all about Jesus in one hundred and fifty-three little stories, following Him over the green hills and by the blue Lake, and the end is the Finished Picture looking out upon thee from a background of sunshine and flowers.

He was the Child of poor people, and angels sang together at His birth. He was carried to Egypt and brought back again to a home in the flowery valley of Nazareth, where His parents taught Him. In boyhood He climbed the hills behind the village, to look out upon the blue sea, played games with other children, and went to school, and learned to read. At twelve He went to the great Golden Temple in Jerusalem and questioned the Teachers of the Law. At thirteen He began to work in His father's workshop, learning to be a Carpenter, carrying wood, and toiling with hammer and saw, and He had brothers and sisters, and cousins, who also lived at Nazareth. He was never at a college, but learned His

Bible, and when He grew to be a man He was the Carpenter of Nazareth, until He was thirty.

He then laid aside His Carpenter's tools, never to take them again, and left Nazareth to be a Teacher of the will of God to men. He went into a lonely desert to prepare Himself, and was there tempted, but resisted the Spirit of Evil. He was baptized in the Jordan by His cousin John, and, gathering twelve disciples round Him, began to teach. He was a strong young countryman of a calm, happy nature, with a beautiful face, clear dark eyes, and most winning voice and manner.

At the time when He began to teach, the people believed that there were laws made by God and many rules made by their religious Teachers, and that no one could have Heaven who did not obey them. And while these Teachers laid heavy commandments upon the people, they themselves did not keep them. They favoured the rich and oppressed the poor, and taught that only Jews could have Heaven. They also taught that good people should not speak to bad people ; that friends should be loved and enemies hated ; that women were far beneath men ; that a wonderful One called the Christ would soon come to the world and with soldiers drive out the Roman conquerors, establish a great Kingdom of cities, armies, and power, and sit on a throne, to live and reign as King of the Jews for ever. But Jesus said that the poor and the rich are all alike before God ; that in religion, God's commands are few and simple, and that men's commands need not be obeyed ; that all days are alike good ; that men are not to hate their enemies ; that woman is man's equal ; that Heaven is not for Jews only ; that men can worship God without priests or temples ; He also said that He was the Christ ; that God was His Father and our Father ; that God's Spirit was in Him, and that His Spirit would be in every one who believed in God and tried to live like Him, and that He would never be a King like the kings of the earth, that His Kingdom of Heaven in the world is not a kingdom of cities, armies, and power, but of goodness, peace, and joy in the hearts of men, women, and little children.

He went from village to village, and taught, now standing under a shady tree, now by the Lake's white shore, now on a green hill, now in a cottage, now in the village church. When in Jerusalem, He taught in the marble porches of the Golden Temple. He also sent out men to spread the good tidings of Heaven. He had many friends who followed Him, some of the most faithful being women ; and wherever He went He was kind and gentle, healing the sick, and speaking loving words to little children. He worked hard, but was full of health, and deep, peaceful happiness, and day after day He tired Himself with walking over the hot dusty roads. He was the most touching speaker that the world has ever heard, so that when He spoke the people left their work, and stood in crowds to listen, and followed Him into lonely places to hear Him again. His teaching was full of stories with beautiful references to flowers, trees, birds, clouds, truth, love, gentleness, Heaven, and God His Father. While the stories are all beautiful in themselves, the most of them never happened, and it is the teaching that surrounds them that they were told for. In some the teaching runs all through them with a double meaning, and these we call parables. Latterly His speaking was full of strong denunciation of the hypocrisy of the Judæan priests and Rulers, whom He called vipers.

Many wonderful things, which are called miracles, are told of Him, such as quieting a storm, creating bread, healing the sick, raising the dead. But we never read of Him doing these things for Himself or to show off His power ; and the teaching which accompanies each miracle is ever of far more consequence than the miracle itself. Like His stories, the miracles are also parables, intended to explain and convey His beautiful teaching. Yet He was hungry and tired, and wept, and slept, and bled like other men, and, through weakness, became too faint to carry His wooden cross through Jerusalem. And His teaching is more wonderful than any miracles, for He spoke the truths of God with a marvellous knowledge of man's nature and of his highest good. What men call miracles may have been but

a fuller knowledge of natural laws, or things misunderstood or incorrectly reported, but His teaching stands sure, confirmed by all the highest aspirations of mankind, full of absolute and universal truth.

He loved all men, and women, and little children, and had a wonderful power of causing them to love Him. His purity—for He did no wickedness—did not keep bad people away from Him, but rather attracted them to Him. In His body He was as other men are, but in His Spirit He had the presence of God. He had a penetrating power of gathering the thoughts and intentions of men, but there were things which He did not know, nor wish to know. He specially loved His mother and His disciples. He loved the faithful Mary Magdalene and the rich young Ruler. He loved and praised little children more than all else on earth, and told His disciples to be like them, for Heaven is theirs.

He spoke much of His kingdom of Heaven among men, and set an example to all the world of a perfectly good and beautiful life, but we know of nothing that He ever wrote. All His sayings and doings were written by His disciples and friends from notes and from memory years after His death, so that His very words, in the Bible, are not to be so much looked to, as their broad Spirit. Of love to God, love to man, self-denial, rewards for being good, and punishments for being bad, He often spoke, and bade each man watch and judge himself and not judge others, Himself refusing to be a judge between people. He said that His followers would be known by their loving each other and keeping His commandments; a good life, a life like His, being the beginning and end of all religion. Wickedness He hated, and looked upon hypocrisy as the worst kind of wickedness, for it pretended to be goodness, and the Priests and Rulers of the Jews He called hypocrites. He sought to free the people from the power of their religious Teachers, their errors regarding the Christ and His Kingdom, and their forms, their ceremonies, their empty shows, which may be only the cloaks of hypocrisy. Their Sabbath

observances, church-going, long prayers, gifts to the Temple, feasting and fasting, sacrifices, sad faces, sober dressing, good appearances, and calling Him "Master"; these, He said, were not religion. A man might do all these and still be bad, while a man might do none of them and yet be good. The test of goodness, He said, is within us, and of it God is the sole judge. Thus He taught the people a way to have Heaven by obeying God, without the help of priests or creeds, saying that men must feel drawn to God, and receive His Spirit direct, if they would have Heaven, and that without His Spirit all else is useless.

He had not taught for many months until the Priests and religious Teachers of the Law, who had friends in all the villages, said He was breaking their rules, and watched Him to have Him punished. They found fault with Him for not washing hands before eating food; for letting His disciples pluck wheat, for healing sick people on the Sabbath day, and for being an unlearned young Carpenter who presumed to teach. Most of all they found fault with Him for saying He was the Son of God. But His power with the people grew, and He set Himself against the Sabbath rules of their hard Teachers. The poor heard Him gladly, and the Priests were annoyed to find that the people were turning against them. At one time He was such a favourite that the people wished to make Him their King. As His favour grew, the hatred of the Priests increased. They frequently challenged Him to prove that He was from God, by working a wonder before them, but this He always refused to do; and they caused the churches of Judæa and Galilee to be shut against Him, and then in Council at Jerusalem they resolved that He must be taken and put to death. They set spies, and made bargains even with their own enemies, to have Him injured, or taken a prisoner. They asked Him tricky questions to entangle Him, but were defeated so often in public discussions in the Temple that they gave that up, and soldiers sent to take Him, when they heard His wonderful voice, refused to touch Him. They tried to keep Him away from their great

Festivals at Jerusalem, but still He came. His twelve disciples kept close to Him, but misunderstood greatly what He taught. They believed He had come to be a great world's King, and whenever they thought things were prospering in that direction they quarrelled as to who should be His greatest officer, two of them giving great offence by asking to be put over all the rest. Yet none of them left Him, helping Him all they could until near the end,—excepting one.

After a little over three years of work, walking about the country in Summer and Winter, teaching everywhere, during which He travelled over many hills and valleys and through hundreds of towns and villages, although He never was further away than one hundred and fifty miles from the village where He was born, He felt that His work was done, the seed of Christianity sown, that would flower over all the world; His Kingdom of Heaven among men. He knew that the hatred of the Priests and Rulers would bring about His death. But death had no terrors for Him, and though His body would feel all the pains and His mind all the shrinkings from death, and strong temptations beset Him, yet to Him life and death were one—He had Heaven within Him. When His time was come to die, He went to Jerusalem, when thousands were there at a Passover Festival, and rode into the city amid the shouts of the people, and a second time drove out the traders from the Golden Temple, and taught there in defiance of the Priests, who tried to stop Him, but were afraid to touch Him because so many of the people were on His side.

Judas betrayed Him, and was sorry for it when too late, and He was taken a prisoner by a band of armed soldiers at midnight in a moonlit garden. He was tried by the Priests and Rulers at a mock trial in the night-time, for His judges were His bitterest enemies, who condemned Him to die for calling Himself the Son of God, which they said was blasphemy. He was then taken from one palace to another, and Pilate, the Roman Governor and judge, while saying He was innocent, gave authority for Him to be killed, but Jesus

rose superior to them all, refusing to plead any defence. Even when scourged and buffeted and spat upon by the soldiers He did not complain, and only when He sank under the weight of His rugged cross did they spare Him. He was crucified while still a young man—thirty-three years and four months old. In no way did He try to escape that death of the Innocent, which He knew would gain the sympathy of the world, and turn the eyes of all men towards Him, and when dying He prayed His Father in Heaven to forgive His murderers. By good men He was buried in Joseph's garden, but His Spirit did not die, and to many people in the weeks that followed, He was made manifest in different ways, some believing that they saw His body alive again, while others doubted. After His death His Spirit, which is God's Spirit, came to His followers in increased measure, making them bold, enabling their minds to understand what He had said, showing them their errors, and convincing them that the Spiritual Kingdom which Jesus had founded, the Kingdom of Heaven among men, was far more glorious and enduring than any other kingdom could ever be.

His teaching made plain the religion which the Priests and religious Teachers had made so difficult ; making it so simple that a child can understand it. His life and death made God and His love to men more fully known, and drew men to Him, enabling them to live good lives, and thus He is the Saviour of mankind. Thou wilt hear it said that He died to satisfy God's anger against men, but Jesus never said so ; saying rather that He died to draw men to God. The Jewish Priests and religious Teachers with their creeds, rules, ceremonies, and symbols, had strangled and stifled the true worship of God, and Jesus set it free, showing that God by His Spirit speaks direct to men and will dwell in them, and teach them His will, and help them to obey it. Thou thyself art a temple of God, and the worship of spirit answering to spirit is within thee.

The effect of His death upon His disciples was as thou hast heard, to banish all foolish dreams, and to open to them the

true meaning of His beautiful life. From self-seeking they became self-sacrificing men, teaching whatever the spirit of God prompted them to speak, first in Jerusalem, denouncing the powerful men who had killed Jesus, and then all over the country, and into foreign lands, and His simple Gospel of listening to and following the voice of God as our Father in Heaven, spread, and was welcomed by true spirits everywhere like light from the sun. They taught that by believing in Jesus as the living Example of God, men would be saved from wickedness and would follow righteousness. And by these men, the Bible, which had been closed for five hundred years, was opened again, and chapters and books added to it of the life of Jesus and His teaching—a new portion, which transcends the old as the sun the moon. And such power is in His life and words that Jesus has become the central figure of the religions of many nations, and influences the religions of many more.

What was He? thou dost ask. God or man? If God, why is He called man? If man, why is He called God? My child, He is both God and man. God is a Spirit, and God was in Jesus to the fullest extent that a man's body can have His Spirit. God was in Him, and yet, having a man's body and a man's feelings, He was liable to be tempted to wickedness just as we are. He showed us how pure and beautiful and good a perfect man is, so to draw us nearer to the Spirit of God which made Him so. Why God chose this way of showing Himself to men we can never know. It is enough that He did so. And we must listen to the teaching of Jesus as to the voice of God, for He who never spoke a false thing, said that His words were the Spirit and Truth of God. Thou, my child, canst never be as good as Jesus, nor have so much of the Spirit of God in thee, yet, though far behind, thou canst follow after and look up to Him, and as God's Spirit groweth in thee, making thy life better, thou wilt gain and come closer to Jesus, still seeing Him, with clear dark eyes bent upon thee, His loving hand outstretched, leading thee onward and upward into God's Kingdom of Heaven. And

remember, that of all who follow Him, He loveth little children best. He told in human words what the Spirit of God in all lands whispers to man's spirit, that men may hear, and read, and believe, and feed upon His words, and learn to trust in and pray to God and get guidance from Him. And by His sorrowful death He sought to win men, so that they, by loving Him, may turn away from wickedness and follow goodness as seen in Him ; for it is of the essence of love to turn the lover into the nature of the thing beloved, and if the thing beloved be Jesus, the perfect One, thou canst not stand still, but must evermore grow liker Him, and so liker God.

And now, my child, what is He to thee ? Whether thou art a gentle fair-haired girl or a dark-haired valiant boy, His life and death are all for thee, as though there were none else but thee in the world. And His life should be especially dear to little children. They cannot understand the creeds, rules, and forms of religion which older people may learn, but the smallest child can believe in the beautiful life of Jesus, and can trust what He said, and try to be patient, gentle, self-denying, good, as He was. And how He loved children ! and clasped them in His arms and blessed them in the presence of their mothers, and set them before His disciples as examples of the kind of minds that have Heaven. How art thou to love Him in return ? Listen to His words as they are read to thee or as thou dost read them. Listen to God's voice within thee guiding thee into right. Obey Jesus, for that is to have faith in Him. Pray to God to help thee, and give thee more of His Spirit, and when in doubt, ask Him to tell thee what is right for thee to do, and do what His voice in thy conscience tells thee is right. Strive against wrong, for to do wrong is to disobey God's voice. Try to do right, for that is to obey and to believe in Him. And the more thou doest right and refusest wrong, the easier will it become to thee, and the Holy Spirit within thee will grow stronger, and thy little life will become purer and more like Jesus.

To imitate His life, thou must try to spread His Kingdom of Heaven among men, of goodness, gentleness, and peace,

by thought, word, and deed. Love all people, judge no one, be thy own priest, and pray to God and have thy spirit strengthened, for that is worship. Let no one come between thee and God, for none can hinder thee from worshipping Him, whether it be in church or on the silent moor, and very few can help thee. Set thy face against all men, creeds, or ceremonies, that would seek to limit thy worship or to mediate between thy spirit and God, for His Spirit can only come to thee direct. Lay thy past deeds in prayer before Him, and ask forgiveness for thy faults; lay also thy future plans, and ask strength to do what is right. Give up everything that would hinder His truth, love, and peace from being highest in thy heart, and thou wilt find that it will raise higher all true love of men and women, all true work, and all true pleasure in life. Strive to let the Spirit of Jesus, and His life and words, flow in upon thy spirit, until His Spirit becometh thine. Then wilt thou be one in spirit with Him as He is One with God.

And what child would not try to be in some part like The Carpenter of Nazareth? To have the gentleness which blessed the little children; the courage which faltered not before Pilate; the wisdom that spoke the Address on Mount Hattin; the self-denial which demanded the escape of His disciples; and the love that gave up His young life to save us all;—virtues which were shared in by John, Peter, James, Paul, and the Marys—names that are far above kings or queens—names which love crowns with a diadem, richer than gold and purer than diamonds—names such as thou mayest win by the help of God's Spirit dwelling in thee. Then the dark door of death will be to thee the gate of Heaven, all glorious within, where children and angels are—children of His Kingdom, who followed these blessed feet that walked the flowery vales and hills of Galilee so many years ago—angels of God that watched Him there. And looking down from the gardens of God's beautiful Home, thou wilt rejoice that by early turning to Him, thy life on earth was spent not in gathering a heap of gold, not